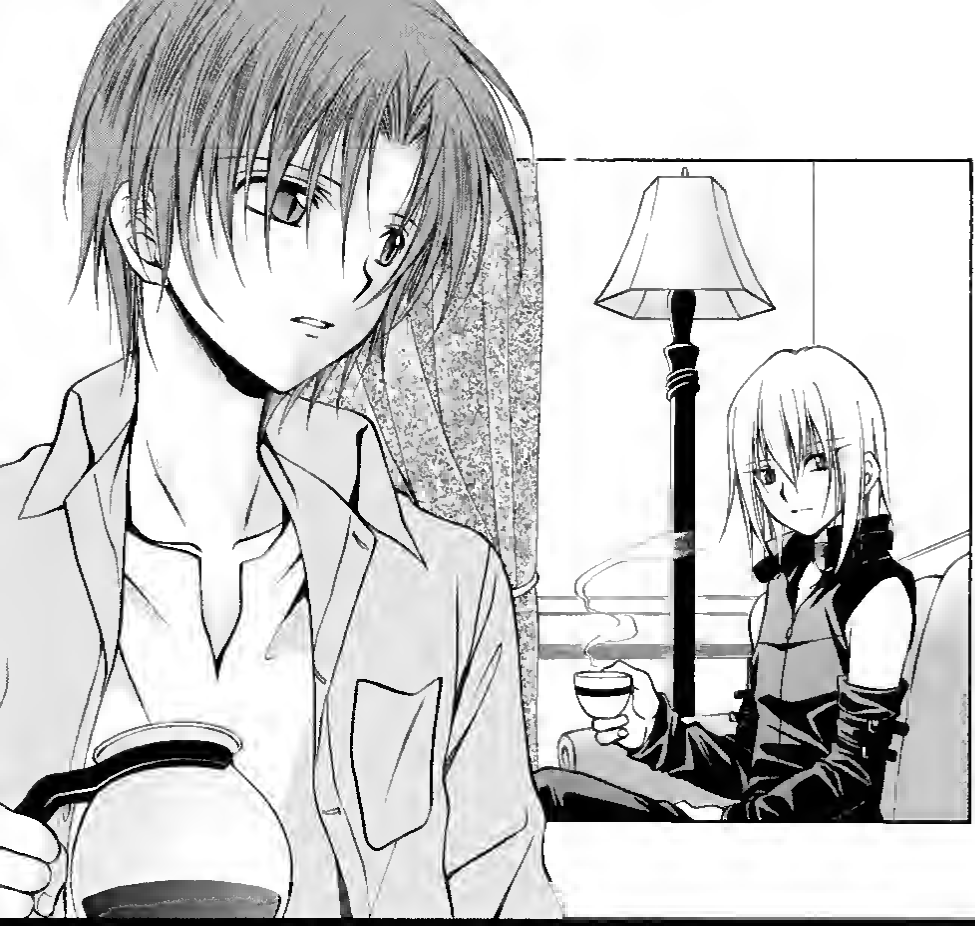
Story by Kyo Shirodaira
Art by Eita Mizuno
12
Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

Spiral THE BONDS OF REASONING 12

STORY/KYO SHIRODAIRA
ART/EITA MIZUNO

Life is But a SPIRAL...



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CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN
THE TWO FACES OF TOMORROW

GETTING TO LEAVE THE HOSPITAL AFTER ONLY ONE WEEK?
THAT'S UNUSUAL.
I CAN GET AROUND ON CRUTCHES.
THEY COULD'VE LET ME GO EVEN EARLIER.
I STILL HAVE TO COME BACK FOR CHECK-UPS, THOUGH.
JIII (ZIIIP)
...LET'S SEE.
DID I FORGET ANYTHING ...?

CONGRATS ON BEING DISCHARGED.
HOW'S IT FEEL, ENDING YOUR HOSPITAL STAY WITHOUT EVENT?
GOD, THE DEVIL, CREATORS ...
HARDLY WHAT I'D CALL "WITHOUT EVENT."
.....
...NOT LONG AGO...
THE REAL EVENTS START NOW.

...HIZUMI CAME TO VISIT.
PATAN (SHUT)
THE MOMENT I HEARD, I ASKED THE FRONT DESK.
BUT HE WAS ALREADY GONE.
HE WAS PROBABLY JUST TESTING THE WATERS.
KO (CLACK)
HE HASN'T MADE ANY MOVES SINCE, BUT...
...IT'S CLEAR HIZUMI WANTS TO MAKE CONTACT WITH YOU.
KO
I KNEW IT.
...BEFORE YOU MAKE YOUR MOVE, IS HIZUMI-SAN...
...HOPING TO KILL YOU FIRST, NARUMI-SAN?
DON'T WORRY.

HIZUMI MAY BE AN ABSOLUTE DEVIL...
...BUT IN THIS SCENARIO AYUMU-KUN IS 1000% INDESTRUCTIBLE.
AND IF HIZUMI COULD KILL YOU, HE'D HAVE DONE IT LONG BEFORE NOW.
...THEN HIZUMI'S ...
...GOING TO TRY TO MAKE ME HIS FRIEND.
THAT'S RIGHT.
IF HE CAN GET THE ONE PERSON WHO CAN KILL HIM ON HIS SIDE...
...HE'LL HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR.
BORROWING RUTH-KUN'S WORDS, NOTHING ABOUT YOU IS SET IN STONE.
THERE'S ALWAYS THE CHANCE THAT YOU COULD CHANGE FROM A GOD INTO A DEVIL.

DON'T FALL FOR HIZUMI'S PLOY.
UNLESS YOU WANT EVERYTHING TO COLLAPSE ...
...DON'T GET CONFUSED. YOU HAVE TO KILL HIZUMI.
...I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT KIYOTAKA'S THINKING.
IF YOU'D ONLY KILLED KANON-KUN, I WOULDN'T BE SO WORRIED ABOUT THIS...
KO (CLACK)
YOU REALLY ARE WISHY-WASHY.
DON'T ENCOURAGE A JUVENILE TO COMMIT MURDER.
KO
IT'S NOT RIGHT.

GA (GRAB)
THERE'S NOTHING JUVENILE ABOUT YOU.
AND THAT'S NOT RIGHT.
HEY!
SPEAKING OF WHICH, HOW IS KANON HILBERT?
I HEARD HE WAS TAKEN BY THE POLICE, BUT IS THERE ANY NEWS SINCE THEN?
...WHEN KANON-KUN WAS ARRESTED, THE WATCHERS SECURED HIM RIGHT AWAY.
RIGHT NOW, HE'S BEHAVING IN THEIR FACILITIES.
HE'S IN CONFINEMENT, BUT THEY'RE TREATING HIM WELL.
IN FACT, YOU'RE ALLOWED TO SEE HIM IF YOU WANT.
AS LONG AS HE'S SAFE, I DON'T NEED TO.
I'D JUST FEEL GUILTY IF HE KILLED HIMSELF OR SOMETHING.

I'M SURE HE'LL STAY ALIVE UNTIL YOU DELIVER RESULTS.
BATAN (SLAM)
THAT BOY DOESN'T HAVE THE GUTS TO DO THAT.
...WHAT DO THEY GET BY JUST KEEPING AN EYE ON THESE CHILDREN?
...THE WATCHERS SOUND LIKE THEY HOLD SOME POWER IN SOCIETY, SO...
...PSYCHO-LOGICALLY AND ANTHRO-POLOGICALLY SPEAKING-
...PROBABLY OFFERS PRETTY INTERESTING INSIGHTS...
...AND CONDUCTING REGULAR SURVEYS OF HOW THESE CHILDREN THINK...
WATCHING HOW THE CHILDREN WHO CARRY YAIBA'S SUPERIOR BLOOD SURVIVE THROUGH ADVERSITY...

SO AS LONG AS THE BLADE CHILDREN POSE NO DIRECT THREAT...
THE WATCHERS ARE INVESTIGATING ...
...THE TRIGGER THAT STIMULATES YAIBA'S BLOOD TO AWAKEN AND CAUSES THE CHILDREN'S TRANSFORMATION FROM THEIR BATTLES WITH THE SAVERS AND HUNTERS.
...THE WATCHERS INTEND TO SIT BACK AND WATCH AS EVENTS UNFOLD, OBSERVING THEM IN A VARIETY OF CIRCUMSTANCES.
AND IF THEY OVERCOME YAIBA'S CURSE...
...AND ARE LEFT WITH JUST THEIR ABILITIES...
...THE VALUE TO SOCIETY COULD BE IMMEASURABLE, DON'T YOU THINK?
THEY'RE STILL TREATING THE CHILDREN THEY CREATED LIKE LAB RATS...
RIO-CHAN AND THE OTHERS ARE ALLOWED VISITORS NOW.
GO AND SAY GOOD-BYE TO THEM BEFORE YOU LEAVE.
GACHA (CLACK)
ガチャ
!
I ALMOST FORGOT.
OH YEAH.

THEY'RE ALL PRETTY WORRIED, UNDERSTAND?
...I'M SURE YOU ALREADY KNOW, BUT...
...DON'T TELL ASAZUKI AND THE OTHERS ABOUT HIZUMI.

EVEN IF THERE SEEMS TO BE NO HOPE NOW...
...WE DON'T KNOW HOW YOU COULD INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME.
OKAY.
IF WE'RE NOT CAREFUL, WE COULD EASILY HAVE ANOTHER "KANON HILBERT" EPISODE.
...UH.
SO LET'S FILL THEM WITH LIES TO PUT THEIR HEARTS AT EASE.
SIGN: RIO TAKEUCHI
KON (KNOCK) KON
401
竹内理緒
COME IN.
IF WORST COMES TO WORST, JUST BLAME ME.
...YOU'RE RIGHT.
AGAIN WITH THE POOR SPIRIT AND PESSIMISM.

ガチャ！
GACHA (CLACK)
YOU'RE LOOKING MUCH BETTER.
...WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? I'VE BEEN DESIGNATED A SAVING GOD.
I'VE GOT TO GET MY ACT TOGETHER.

I'VE NEVER WAITED FOR A GOD TO PRAY TO BEFORE.
AS FAR AS I WAS CONCERNED, GOD...
...ONLY ROBBED ...
...AND DESTROYED.
HE WAS UNMERCIFUL.
SO (TOUCH)
But ...
... now ...
KYU (SQUEEZE)
...I'm praying from the bottom of my heart.

Please defeat all the unmerciful gods...
...and prepare us a story that isn't anything like the tale of slaughter we're living.
Before I die, please grant me...
...time to atone for my sins.

...IF YOU NEED MY STRENGTH, PLEASE CALL FOR ME ANY TIME.
SU (SLIP)
!
I won't hold anything back...
...and I will gladly be your sword and shield.
GEEZ.
IF THAT'S THE CASE, YOU'RE WAY MORE RELIABLE THAN I AM.
HEH HEH.
YOU WORK TOO HARD.
TAKE IT EASY AND REST FOR A WHILE.
HANG A STOCKING OVER YOUR BEDSIDE.

I'LL STUFF IT WITH THE STORY YOU WISH FOR.
I'M NOT SOME LITTLE KID WHO GETS GIFTS FROM SANTA ANYMORE.
THAT'S OKAY.
YOU'RE SO TINY, SANTA MIGHT MISTAKE YOU FOR ONE.
I'M NOT THAT TINY!
BUT... AT THE SAME TIME...
THE WAY HE'S ACTING LIKE EVERY-THING'S FINE WHEN THE SITUATION'S SO DIRE...
...IS PRETTY AWFUL OF NARUMI-SAN...

IN HIS OWN WAY...
...IT'S KINDA SWEET OF HIM TOO.
SIGN: KOUSUKE ASAZUKI
418
浅月香介
...HEY.
SO WHO ARE YOU TO COME SEE HOW I'M DOING?
YOU'VE GOT BROKEN RIBS AND BRUISES ALL OVER.

I DON'T SEE WHAT THE BIG DEAL IS.
WOULD YOU RATHER RIO CAME INSTEAD?
.....
HAA (SIGH) はあ
...IT SEEMS THE LITTLE BROTHER HAS LEARNED EVERYTHING, BUT...
...FROM HERE ON OUT...
...WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN?
GOOD QUESTION.

IF I WERE BURNED AT THE STAKE, I WOULDN'T HOLD IT AGAINST ANYBODY.
THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO NOW.
I'M GUILTY OF ALL SORTS OF CRIMES.
EVEN IF YOU TELL ME THERE'S A SAVING GOD...
...
HE'S NOT SOMEONE I'M ABOUT TO RELY ON.
SO (TOUCH)

...I hope we can be saved.
Brother.
...STOP WITH THE "BROTHER" STUFF.

...LET ME BE...
...CLOSER TO YOU THAN ANYONE...
WHAT GIVES!?
AT LEAST LET ME...
...CALL YOU THAT.
...!?
EVEN IF YOU AND I ARE THE CLOSEST TWO PEOPLE ON EARTH...
...I CAN'T GO MAKING A MOVE ON MY "LITTLE SISTER"...

LET ME HAVE MY DREAM.
GYU (SQUEEZE)
きゅ!
I CAN'T MAKE A MOVE IN REAL LIFE, BUT...
...IF YOU KEEP CALLING ME "BROTHER," I WON'T GET TO IN MY DREAMS EITHER.

AHHH...
SORRY TO SPOIL THE MOOD, BUT...
YO.
SFX: PA (RELEASE)
WHY, YOU!
AT LEAST KNOCK BEFORE BARGING INTO SOME-ONE'S ROOM!
...Idiot.

HOW-
... BROTHER.
PATAN (SHUT)
パターン
SORRY.
I'LL BE MORE CAREFUL NEXT TIME.
HOW MUCH DID HE OVER-HEAR!?
SO.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I'M HERE TO SAY GOOD-BYE...
AND...
EVEN THOUGH IT'S NOT LIKE ME, I'M WILLING TO BECOME YOUR "SAVING GOD."
I FEEL BAD FOR YOU, SO LEAN ON ME A LITTLE.

...YOU MEAN YOU CAN OVERCOME YAIBA'S CURSE?
NOTHING'S IMPOSSIBLE, RIGHT?
SOMEONE MUST HAVE A LOT OF TIME ON HIS HANDS.
WOULD YOU RATHER I DIDN'T?
...I GET IT.

NOT LIKE WE'VE GOT ANYTHING TO LOSE.
RIGHT.
GOOD LUCK. YOU'LL NEED IT.
KA (CLUCK)
TAKE IT EASY AND MAKE OUT WITH YOUR LITTLE SISTER WHILE YOU WAIT
HIRA (WAVE)
HIRA
BOX: TERIA
I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT LITTLE BROTHER!
HAS HE DEVELOPED AN ATTITUDE OR WHAT!?
ZEE (WHEEZE)
ZEE
PATAN (SHUT)

...PUSHED HIMSELF PRETTY FAR BEYOND HIS LIMIT.
...BUT THAT JERK'S ...
...SOMETHING WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT...
THAT, OR MAYBE HE'S BEEN BURDENED WITH...
...EITHER WAY, YOU SAID YOU'D DO IT.
FU CHEW
!?

ARE YOU SURE YOU SHOULDN'T SAY GOOD-BYE TO YOUR SISTER?
I SAW HER BEFORE YOU CAME.
PA CFLASH)
THEN WHAT ABOUT RUTHERFORD-SAN?
.....
MAYBE I'LL BELIEVE IN YOU A LITTLE...

I CAN'T PROMISE HIM ANYTHING.
THERE'S NOTHING FOR ME TO TELL HIM NOW.
THE CHALLENGES YOU STILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH ARE...
ONE: SOLVING THE HIZUMI-SAN PROBLEM WITHOUT KILLING HIM.
TWO: BREAKING THE BLADE CHILDREN'S CURSE.
...JUST THOSE TWO, RIGHT?
PA
12
...BUT IT LOOKS LIKE HARD TIMES ARE AHEAD.

THREE: FIGURING OUT WHAT MY BROTHER'S REALLY PLANNING.
CHIIN (PHING)
...THERE'S THAT TOO.
...I DON'T BELIEVE THAT EVERY-THING I'VE BEEN TOLD IS THE TRUTH.
EVEN IF THOSE TWO MEANT TO GIVE ME ALL THE FACTS...
I EVEN HAVE MY DOUBTS THAT MY BROTHER'S ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO HAVE ME KILL HIZUMI.
...THERE'S A CHANCE THEY'RE BOTH STILL BEING DUPED BY MY BROTHER.
I CAN'T SHAKE THE FEELING THAT IN THIS ORDERLY, FIXED SET-UP...
...SOME VILE TRAP IS POISED TO SPRING.
I HAVE TO THINK THAT MY BROTHER'S PLANNING SOMETHING WORSE.

THAT'S 'COS THIS WHOLE SITUATION'S BEEN VILE FROM THE START.
G'AA (WHRR)
SU (SIGH)

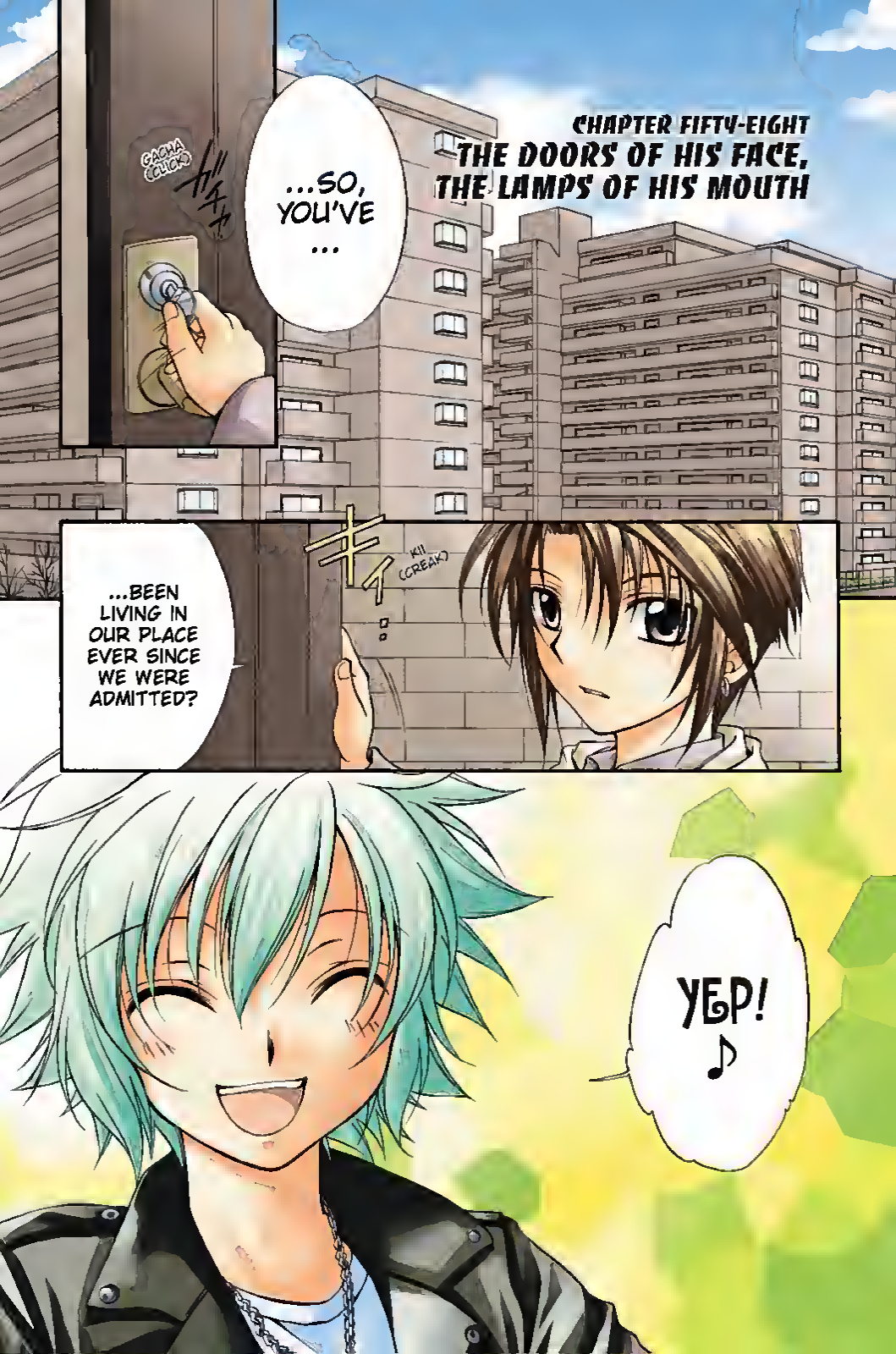
ZAA
(WHOOSH)

HEY THERE.
AYUMU.
YOU FIND THE SONG YOU WANT TO SING AS GOD?

...THEN WHAT SONG...
...HIZÜMI?
...WILL YOU SING AS THE DEVIL...

Spiral

THE BONDS OF REASONING


CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT
THE DOORS OF HIS FACE, THE LAMPS OF HIS MOUTH
GACHA (CLICK)
...SO, YOU'VE ...
KII (CREAK)
...BEEN LIVING IN OUR PLACE EVER SINCE WE WERE ADMITTED?
YEP! ♪

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT
THE DOORS OF HIS FACE, THE LAMPS OF HIS MOUTH

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT
THE DOORS OF HIS FACE, THE LAMPS OF HIS MOUTH

SPIRAL

...THAT IDIOT BROTHER OF MINE.
BESIDES, KIYOTAKA SAID I COULD STAY HERE.
I FELT KINDA BAD, BUT...
...IT'S WAY TOO EXPENSIVE TO GET A HOTEL OR PLACE OF MY OWN.
HE DOESN'T EVEN VISIT MY SISTER IN THE HOSPITAL, AND THEN HE GOES AND DOES A THING LIKE THAT.
YOU SAID IT.
I SCOLDED HIM ABOUT THAT TOO, BUT...
...HE'S NOT THE TYPE TO LISTEN TO OTHER PEOPLE'S OPINIONS, YOU KNOW?
I ALSO DID THE LAUNDRY THAT WAS IN THE HAMPERS.
...OH YEAH.
I'VE BEEN CLEANIN' UP AFTER MYSELF.

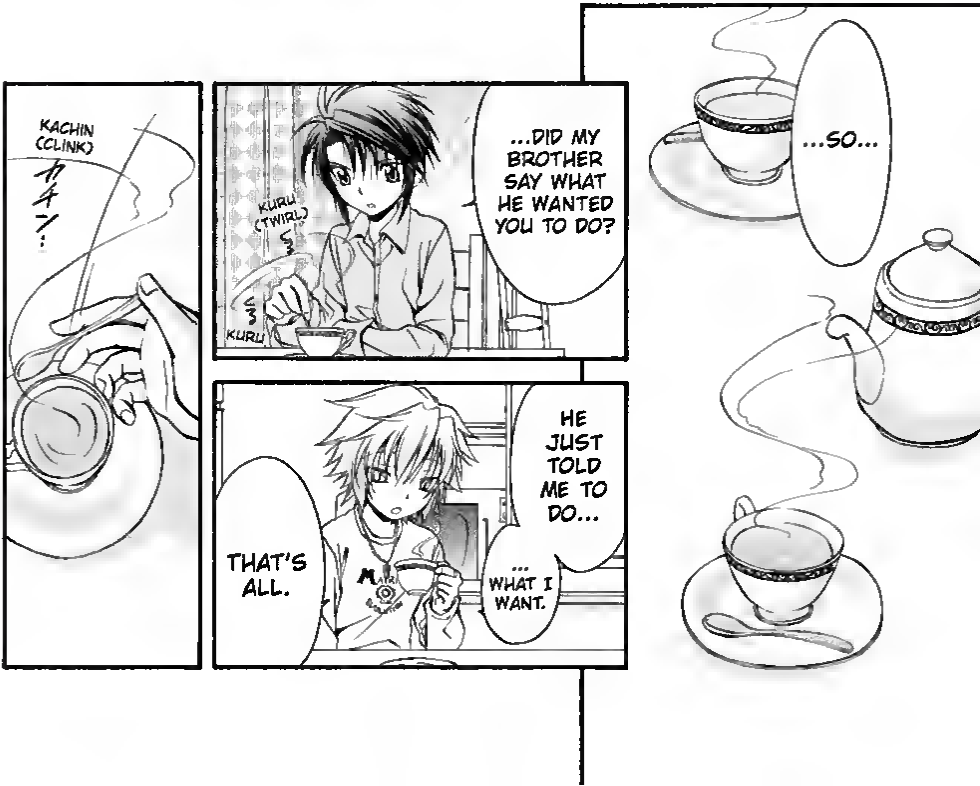
AFTER THAT, I DID SOME GROCERY SHOPPING AND RESTOCKED THE FRIDGE.
.....
ALSO, YOU REMEMBER THAT PUDDIN' YOU MADE?
WELL, WHEN I CAME IT WAS LOOKIN' A LITTLE IFFY, SO I THREW IT OUT.
AND THE MILK AND SOME MEAT WERE NEARIN' THEIR EXPIRATION DATES, SO I FINISHED THEM OFF.
GOOD, THOSE WERE WEIGHING ON MY MIND.
LET'S SEE... WHAT ELSE...
...
ALL THE MAIL'S THAT'S COME SINCE YOU WERE OUT, I PUT OVER HERE...
.....

...EXCUSE ME...
NARUMI-SAN.
HOW CAN YOU BE CHIT-CHATTING SO CASUALLY!?
BISHI (WHIP)
YOU'VE ONLY JUST MET THIS GUY!
HE'S YOUR ENEMY, REMEMBER!?
WHAT ABOUT THE FACT THAT HE MOVED INTO YOUR HOME WITHOUT YOUR PERMISSION, NARUMI-SAN!!?
MY BROTHER GAVE HIM THE OKAY, SO IT'S NOT COMPLETELY WITHOUT PERMISSION.
SIGH...
THIS APARTMENT IS IN MY BROTHER'S NAME ANYWAY.
I WAS GOIN' TO MAKE SURE IT WAS ALL RIGHT WITH YOU TOO, BUT...
...WHEN I GOT TO THE HOSPITAL, THEY TURNED ME AWAY AT THE DOOR.
NOT THAT I WANTED KIRIE-CHAN TO FIND ME EITHER.

ENOUGH STANDIN' AROUND TALKIN'.
I'LL POUR US SOME TEA.
SURE.
THAT ASSAM TEA IN THE CUPBOARD OKAY TO USE?
DON'T WORRY.
I'M GRATEFUL FOR ALL THE WORK YOU SAVED ME HAD THE HOUSE BEEN ABANDONED ALL WEEK.
GOOD.
...HIZUMI-SAN...
...SEEMS TO HAVE IT IN MIND TO LIVE WITH YOU NOW, HUH?
GATA (CLATTER)
IF HE WANTS ME ON HIS SIDE, THEN THAT'S A SMART MOVE.

BUT...
...HE'S THE "DEVIL" AND YOUR "ENEMY," ISN'T HE?
I'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T BECOME EITHER.
BESIDES, MY SISTER IS GONNA BE IN THE HOSPITAL FOR A WHILE.
IT DOESN'T BOTHER ME.
NARUMI-SAN.
.....

SINCE HIZUMI-SAN'S ALREADY LIVING WITH YOU, THEN CAN I MOVE IN TOO?
...YOU ALREADY KNOW THAT'D BE A BAD IDEA.


KACHIN (CLINK)
カチン
KURU (TWIRL)
KURU
...DID MY BROTHER SAY WHAT HE WANTED YOU TO DO?
HE JUST TOLD ME TO DO...
... WHAT I WANT.
THAT'S ALL.
...SO...

KACHA (CLACK)
.....
...SO WHAT DO YOU ...
...WANT TO DO?
EVOLUTION
...UNTIL YOU KILL ME...
...YOU PROBABLY DON'T LIKE THAT WORDIN'.
AH...
WHAT I MEAN IS, UNTIL I DIE...

WELL...
...IT'D BE NICE TO SPEND THE TIME I HAVE LEFT HAVING FUN.
THAT'S WHAT I THINK.
YOU SEE...
YOU CAN'T CHANGE FATE.
...I GET IT.
OUR FATE DICTATES WHETHER WE'LL BE BLESSED OR CURSED...
...SO GETTIN' DOWN ABOUT IT WON'T DO ANY GOOD.
I MIGHT AS WELL HAVE A POSITIVE OUTLOOK.
AT LEAST, I THINK SO.

I'M READY.
UNTIL YOU KILL ME...
...LET'S HAVE FUN TOGETHER.

...
FATE
...
...CAN'T CHANGE?
...IS LIFE LONG ENOUGH ...
MATRIX
EVOLUTION

...TO PUT THAT TO THE TEST?
... YOU'RE RIGHT.
THE OLD ME WOULD HAVE ANSWERED, "NO, IT'S TOO SHORT."
AHH.
I KNOW HOW IT IS TO CHANGE YOUR MIND.
YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH AN AWFUL LOT RECENTLY.
YOU HAVEN'T ALTERED FATE THAT MUCH, YOU KNOW?
.....

HIZUMI-SAN'S THE ONE SETTING THE PACE.
.....
...IS IT JUST ME, OR IS THIS GOING VERY BADLY?
HEY.
NARUMI-SAN.
THAT'S RIGHT!
SCHOOL BREAK ENDED YESTERDAY.
WHEN WILL YOU BE GOING BACK TO SCHOOL?
SCHOOL?
KACHA (CLACK)

YESTER-DAY...
...I THINK IT'S OKAY TO WAIT AND SEE HOW YOU FEEL.
YOU'RE NOT BACK TO YOUR OLD SELF YET, SO...
I DON'T REMEMBER ASKING.
AND AFTER I WENT OUT OF MY WAY TO ESCORT YOU HOME FROM THE HOSPITAL!
DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT
...WHICH MEANS...
...YOU'RE PLAYING HOOKY TODAY?
KAN (CLANK)
KAN
TAKE THAT!
AND THAT!
KAN
KAN
...SPEAKIN' OF SCHOOL, I...
...START TOMORROW.

AT TSUKIOMI HIGH.
I WAS THINKING MAYBE I'D TRANSFER INTO AYUMU'S CLASS.
KIYOTAKA SAID HE TOOK CARE OF THE PAPERWORK.
SO TSUKIOMI HIGH'S GOING TO HAVE ONE MORE UNRULY STUDENT RUNNING AROUND!?
IT'S AN UNRULY SCHOOL TO BEGIN WITH.
THAT DOES IT!!
BOTORI (DROP)

IF I STAY AWAY TOO LONG, I'LL LOSE TOUCH WITH THE REST OF THE CLASS.
...THEN I GUESS I'LL GO BACK TOMORROW TOO.
NARUMI-SAN, YOU'RE ALREADY WAY OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE CLASS.
THAT SO?
FROM THE LOOKS OF HIM, HE DOESN'T SEEM THE TYPE TO PLAY WELL WITH OTHERS.
.....
IS HE REALLY THE KID IN CLASS WHO NOBODY LIKES?
KACHA
KACHA (CLACK)

WELL ...
...TAKE CARE ON YOUR WAY HOME.
HAA (SIGH)
はあ
THE ONE WHO SHOULD TAKE CARE IS YOU, NARUMI-SAN.
THAT BOY IS DEFINITELY DANGEROUS.
ZAA (SHHH)
HE'S PLOTTING SOMETHING, DON'T YOU AGREE?
I KNOW THAT.

HE IS MY FATE ITSELF.
EVEN IF THIS TURNS INTO A BLOOD-BATH...
...I CAN'T RUN AWAY.
DON'T WORRY SO MUCH.
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU.
... TOMOR-ROW MORNING ...

CHA (CHAK)
...I'LL COME GET YOU FOR SCHOOL.
OKAY.
I'LL BE WAITING.
...WELL.
PATAN (SHUT)
PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, OKAY?
...SEEMS PRETTY CUTE. SHE'S A GOOD GAL.
THAT PIGTAILED GIRL...

SO ...
...THAT GIRL...
...WHAT'S HER NAME, ANYWAY?
THEN THAT MAKES HER A PERFECT MATCH FOR YOU.
HA HA HA
ACTUALLY, YOU'D BE SURPRISED HOW DOWNRIGHT AWFUL SHE IS.
I FOR-GOT.
...YOU KNOW ...
...THAT'S PRETTY MEAN OF YOU.
BOTTLE: JOHNNY GREEN
...AYUMU.
...HEY...

WHAT?
POCHAN (PLIP)
HYU (WHOOSH)
PASA (FWAP)
ON SECOND THOUGHT, HOW ABOUT WE PUT IT TO THE TEST?

...YOU'RE AWFULLY CALM.
YOU'RE GONNA LAUGH, BUT THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME THIS HAS HAPPENED TO ME.
...IF YOU JUST DIED...
...NOBODY WOULD BE ABLE TO KILL ME.

IT'D BE SO EASY TO KILL YOU, YOU KNOW THAT?
FATE HAS IT THAT I CAN'T KILL YOU, BUT...
GU (PRESS)
...GIVEN THAT MY DESTINY IS TO BE KILLED BY YOUR HANDS...
...YOU WOULDN'T BLAME ME FOR PUTTIN' THAT FATE TO THE TEST, WOULD YOU?

IT'D BE Q.E.D.
...THEN I'D WIN.
NOBODY CAN KILL ME.
AND I'M GOING TO KILL YOU.
THOSE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE CONCRETE DESTINIES.
BUT IF YOU CAN KILL ME...
TSU (SLIT)
...THEN THAT'S THE BEST PROOF FOR SHOWING THAT FATE CAN BE CHANGED.

MY DEATH RIGHT NOW...
...WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY SERVE AS EVERYONE'S HOPE.
IF OUR FATE CAN BE ALTERED BY PEOPLE'S WILLS AND ACTIONS...
...THEN THE FATE OF THE BLADE CHILDREN CAN CHANGE TOO.
AND SOMEONE ELSE WHO CAN KILL YOU...
...WILL APPEAR IN MY PLACE.

CHEAP LOGIC.
BUT LOGIC NONETHE-LESS.
...DO IT QUICKLY.
POCHAAN (LIP)

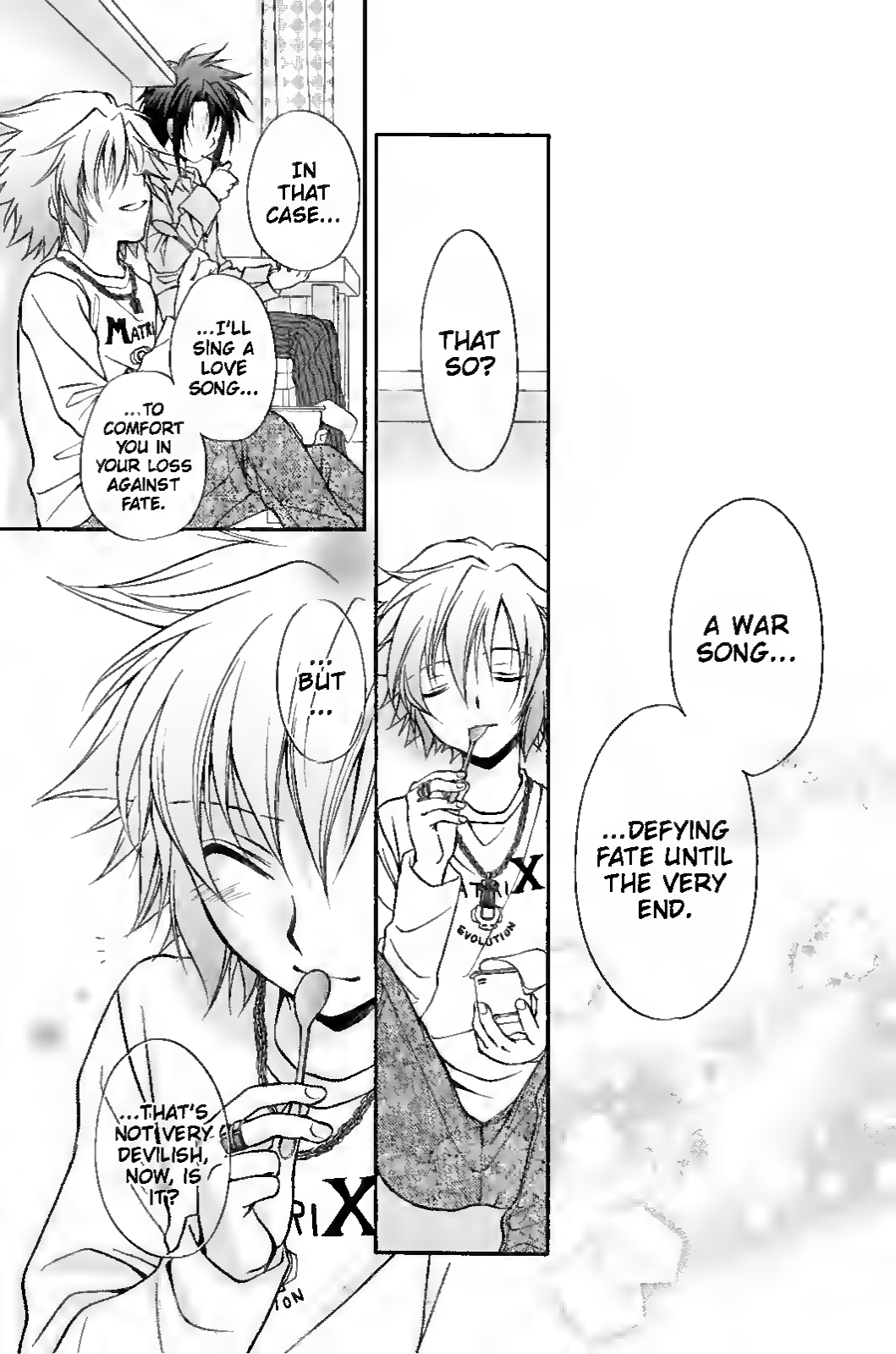
THE KNIFE'S GETTING COLD.
.....

GYU (CLENCH)
KOTO (CLUNK)
...BETWEEN A FATE TO KILL SOMEONE...
...AND A FATE TO BE KILLED BY SOMEONE...
...WHICH IS HAPPIER, DO YOU SUPPOSE?
SUI (LIFT)
...I GUESS WE'LL KNOW THAT WHEN BOTH OF US ARE DEAD.

A LONG LIFE ISN'T THE ONLY MEANS TO HAPPINESS.
YOU BOUGHT THESE YOGURTS, I TAKE IT.
I'M HAVING ONE.
AH.
LEAVE THE BLUE-BERRY FLAVOR.
HAVE AN ALOE, IF THERE'RE ANY LEFT.
HOW ABOUT A MIXED BERRY?
THAT'S FINE.
GIMME THE BLUE-BERRY.
I'LL HAVE ONE TOO.
PON (PAT)

ANSWER ME THIS.
AYUMU.
BERI (PEEL)
WHAT KIND OF SONG DO YOU WANT TO SING AS GOD?
.....
A WAR SONG...
...DEFYING FATE UNTIL THE VERY END.
THAT SO?
IN THAT CASE...
...I'LL SING A LOVE SONG...
...TO COMFORT YOU IN YOUR LOSS AGAINST FATE.
... BUT ...
...THAT'S NOT VERY DEVILISH, NOW, IS IT?

.....
WHAT KIND OF SONG DO YOU WANT TO SING AS GOD?
BERI (PEEL)
ANSWER ME THIS.
AYUMU.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THAT SO?
A WAR SONG...
...DEFYING FATE UNTIL THE VERY END.
...BUT...
...THAT'S NOT VERY DEVILISH, NOW, IS IT?

.....
NARUMI-SAAAN!
PIN (DING)
BOON (DOONG)
KACHA (CLACK)
HURRY IT UP...
... HIZUMI.
YOU CAN'T BE LATE ON YOUR FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL.
I KNOW THAT.
I'M HERE TO WALK WITH YOU TO SCHOOL!

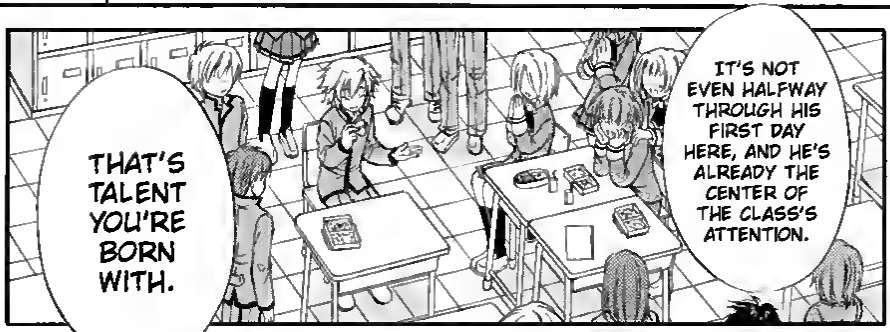
KOSO (WHISPER)
SO NOTHING HAPPENED AFTER I LEFT?
NOPE.
IT WAS PEACEFUL.
BATAN (SLAM)
.....
TON (TAP)
TON
...WHAT ABOUT AUTO-LOCK?
NOW YOU MENTION IT?
TO ME.
WELL, LET'S GET GOIN'!
BY THE WAY...
I SMELL A LIE.
RIGHT.
HAAA (SIIIGH)

...THINGS ARE GOING TO BE TOUGH.
...IT LOOKS LIKE...

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE
THE TOYNBEE CONVECTOR

HE'S REALLY SOMETHING.
HIZUMI, I MEAN.
SU (LIFT)


IT'S NOT EVEN HALFWAY THROUGH HIS FIRST DAY HERE, AND HE'S ALREADY THE CENTER OF THE CLASS'S ATTENTION.
THAT'S TALENT YOU'RE BORN WITH.

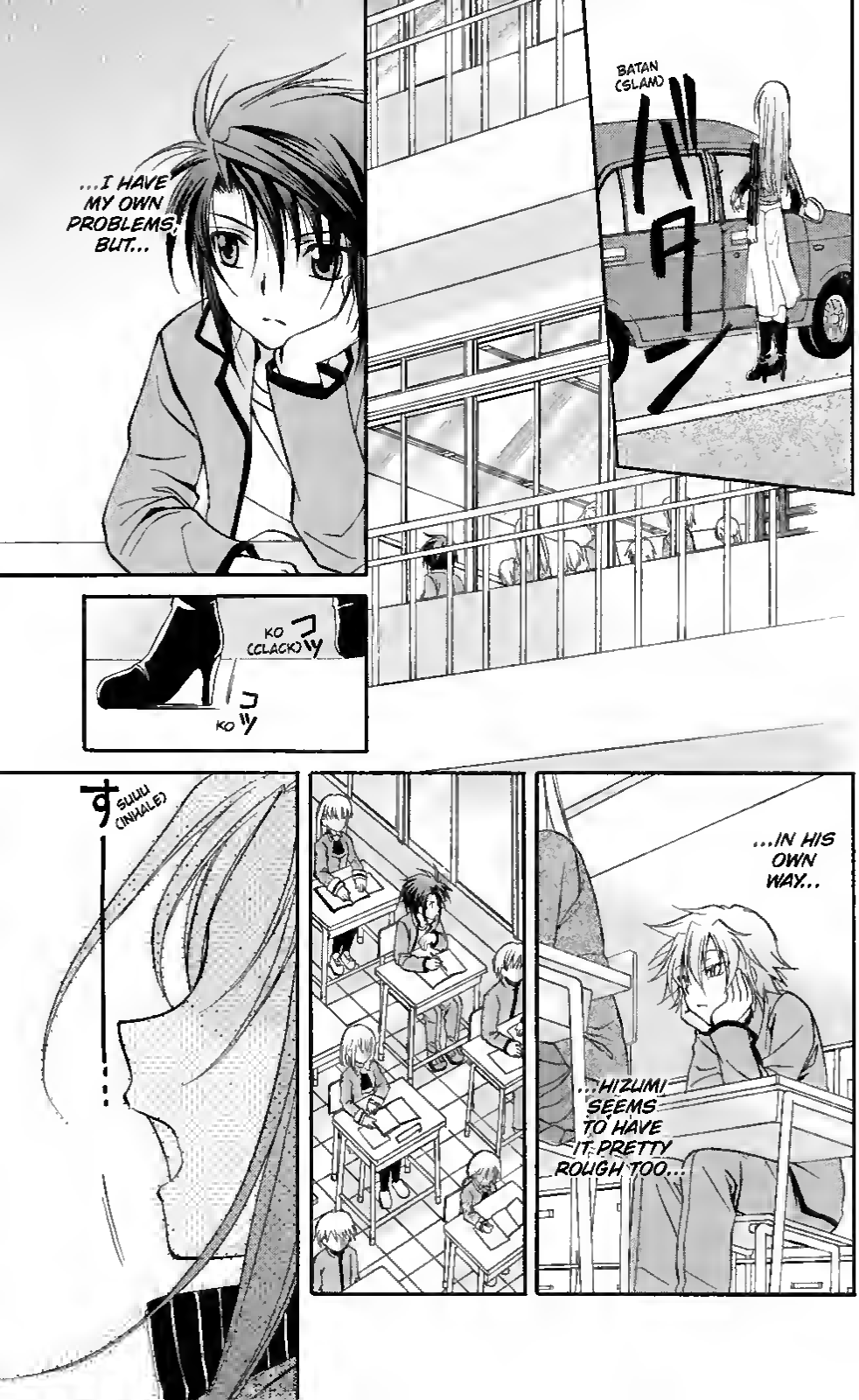
...UM.
THAT'S ALL WELL AND GOOD, BUT...
IF HE KEEPS IT UP, HE COULD BE ELECTED FOR STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT.
WHAT ...
...IS THIS?
NARUMI-SAN.
DON! (THUD)
ZA (SLIDE)
ZA
YOUR BOXED LUNCH.
I MADE IT FOR YOU, SO BE GRATEFUL AND EAT UP.

...NARUMI-SAN.
YOU WENT OUT OF YOUR WAY...
...TO PREPARE A LUNCH FOR ME...!?
WHAAOOO
WHAT DO YOU HAVE UP YOUR SLEEVE!?
MU (GRR)
I JUST FOUND THE TIME.
YOU PUT SOME STRANGE DRUG IN IT, DIDN'T YOU..!?
POCHI (POP)
I HAD TO MAKE ONE FOR HIZUMI TOO.
Today's menu is...
PA (FLASH)
SINCE MY BODY'S NOT QUITE AT A HUNDRED PERCENT YET, IT'S GOOD PRACTICE FOR ME.
.....
SUTON (PLOP)
...OKAY, THEN.
I'LL EAT IT WITH GRATI-TUDE.
...SO.

I DON'T MIND HIZUMI-SAN INSTANTA-NEOUSLY BECOMING THE POPULAR KID, BUT...
...WHAT ABOUT YOU, NARUMI-SAN?
AREN'T YOU BEING QUESTIONED TO DEATH AFTER THAT KANON-SAN INCIDENT?
I'M HEARING HUSHED RUMORS FLY ALL AROUND ME.
SFX: HISO (WHISPER) HISO
ひそ
ひそ
OF COURSE, BECAUSE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INCIDENT WAS SO SUSPICIOUS ...
...EVERYONE'S TOO SCARED TO ASK ME ABOUT IT DIRECTLY.
AHH ...
YOU HAD A POOR REPUTATION TO BEGIN WITH, NARUMI-SAN...
...SO PEOPLE PROBABLY THINK IT'S DANGEROUS TO GET INVOLVED WITH YOU.
NOW YOU'RE A BONA FIDE LONELY OUTCAST.
...DON'T SAY IT SO HAPPILY...

STILL, I CAN'T REALLY IMAGINE YOU FITTING IN WITH THE CLASS AND BEING POPULAR, NARUMI-SAN.
YOU REALLY ARE THE POLAR OPPOSITE OF HIZUMI-SAN.
IT'S LIKE THEY SAY, THE CHEERFUL PERSON HAS THE UPPER HAND.
WELL, I'M THE GLOOMY PERSON.
.....
.....
.....
.....
AH!
YOU'RE FEELING DOWN?
KATA (CLACK)
BUT IT'S OKAY.
YOU'RE NOT COMPLETELY ALONE, NARUMI-SAN.
YOU HAVE ME!

EVEN IF THE ENTIRE WORLD TURNS ITS BACK ON YOU...
...YOU'LL STILL BE THE STRONGEST AS LONG AS YOU HAVE ME!!
GO (WHACK)
.....
I THINK I'D RATHER BE ALONE AT THAT POINT.
KI (SCREE)
KI
KI


...I HAVE MY OWN PROBLEMS, BUT...
BATAN (SLAM)
KO (CLACK)
KO
SUUU (INHALE)
...IN HIS OWN WAY...
...HIZUMI SEEMS TO HAVE IT PRETTY ROUGH TOO...

HIZUMI!!
YOU REALLY DID IT THIS TIME!!
BAN (BANG)
ZAWA (MURMUR)
SFX: TSUKA (STRUT) TSUKA TSUKA
EXCUSE ME.
CLASS IS CURRENTLY IN SESSION.
IF YOU'RE HIS GUARDIAN ...
I'VE GOT PERMISSION FROM THE HIGHER UPS!!
OOF!
SHOVE IT!!

...JUST WHEN I WAS WONDERING WHERE YOU'D DISAPPEARED OFF TO...
NURA (LOOM)
GUI (YANK)
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S A LITTLE CHEEKY TO SUDDENLY ENROLL IN SCHOOL?
UWAH, KIRIE-CHAN.
...LET'S NOT GET VIOLENT, NOW.

むずっ
MUNZU (DRAG)
YOU'RE COMING WITH ME TO THE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE!
YOU AND I NEED TO HAVE A CHAT.
SHUT UP!
GUYS...
...I'LL BE RIGHT BACK, SO WAIT FOR ME.
SORRY ...
... TEACHER.
WELL, WELL!
PIERCED SIDEBURNS BOY IS HERE TOO!!
GAKU (SLUMP)
GIRO (GLARE)
...IS REALLY OVER THE TOP ...
... SHEESH, THAT WOMAN ...

生徒指導室
DOYO (STUNNED)
DON'T PRETEND THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU
YOU'RE COMING WITH US!
SIGN: COUNSELOR'S OFFICE
KARA (SLIDE)
...I KNOW THE SITUATION.
KIYOTAKA'S STILL MISSING...
...AND YOU TWO ARE LIVING TOGETHER AND ACTING ALL CHUMMY...
...OR SO THEY SAY.
THAT'S RIGHT.
SO THERE'S NOTHING FOR YOU TO WORRY ABOUT, KIRIE-CHAN.

IT'S NOT LIKE I'M BEING A BURDEN TO HIM.
IN FACT, THE SITUATION'S AS PEACEFUL AS IT CAN BE. SEE?
PUCHI (SNAP)
プチ
BAN (BANG)
WHAT GOOD IS PEACE-FUL!?
AND AYUMU-KUN, I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU NOT TO FALL FOR HIZUMI'S LIES!!
KARA (RATTLE)
カラ
カラ..
KARA
AYUMU-KUN, YOU'RE GOING TO KILL HIM!
AND HIZUMI, YOU'RE GOING TO BE KILLED BY HIM!
BISHI (WHIP)
BISHI
THIS ISN'T HOW IT'S SUPPOSED TO GO!!

IT MAKES EVEN AN INNOCENT BOY LIKE MYSELF...
...WANT TO TURN TO VIOLENCE, YOU KNOW?
SFX: HISO (WHISPER)
PSST.
KIRIE-CHAN'S SUPER-HARSH.
...IT'S ALWAYS "YOU'RE GOING TO BE KILLED."
EVERY TIME SHE SEES ME...
THAT'S YOUR DESTINY!!
KIRIE-CHAN'S WICKED BY NATURE.
EHHH?
...THAT "AN INNOCENT LIKE KIRIE-CHAN" WANTS TO TURN TO VIOLENCE?
...IF I HAD TO SAY, ISN'T IT YOUR FAULT...
DOKA (THUNK)
STOP MOCKING YOUR ELDERS, YOU TWO!!

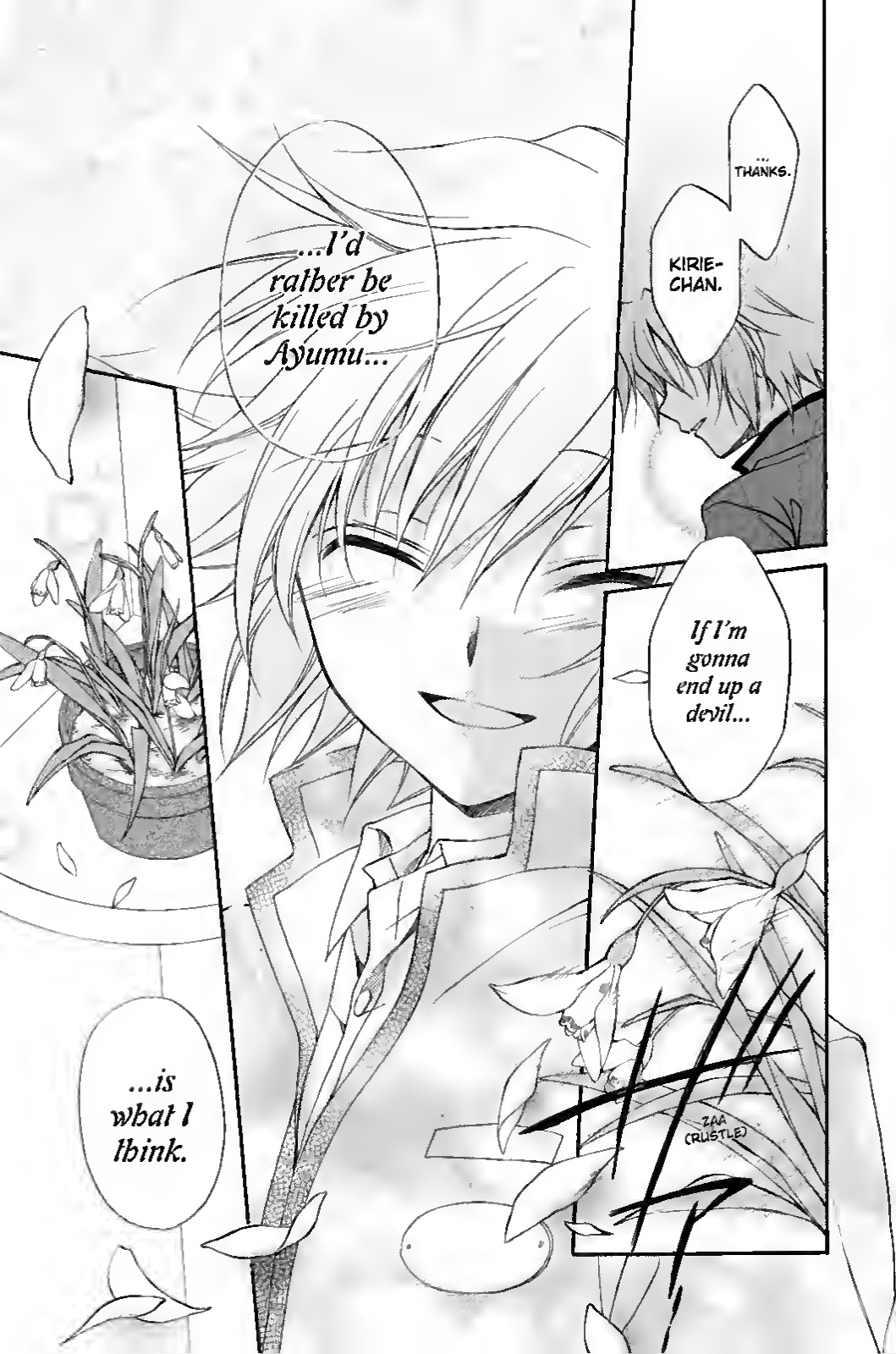
KOTO (CLANK)
コト…
AYUMU-KUN…
DO YOU UNDER-STAND?
MANY PEOPLE'S LIVES ARE RIDING ON YOUR CHOICES, SEE?
LIKE A DOMINO EFFECT …
…ONE SMALL DECISION ON YOUR PART DECIDES THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD IN THE END, UNDERSTAND?
BUT I'VE DECIDED TO DEFY FATE.
LET ME DO WHAT I WANT FOR A LITTLE WHILE.
…I KNOW.

EVEN A GOOD-NATURED KID LIKE YOURSELF ...
...THINKS HE CAN KILL SOMEONE HE'S GROWN CLOSE TO?
SURE.
I CAN KILL HIM.
...
OH?
BESIDES, I'LL KILL HIZUMI EVENTUALLY, SO WHY THE RUSH?
PIKU (TWITCH)
BE IT MY BEST FRIEND OR MY SIBLING...
...IF I HAD NO OTHER OPTION, I'D KILL HIM EVEN IF IT MADE ME PUKE BLOOD.

SAA (RUSTLE)
IF I WASN'T PREPARED TO DO THAT...
...DO YOU REALLY THINK I'D TRY TO OPPOSE FATE OR MY BROTHER?

AT LEAST YOUR BEING IN SCHOOL MAKES KEEPING AN EYE ON YOU EASIER.
GET BACK TO CLASS.
KO (CLACK)
... FINE.
GATA (CLATTER)
GYU (SQUISH)
KACHI (CLICK)
I KNOW YOU'VE COMMITTED NO CRIME.
HIZUMI.
.....

AND RIGHT NOW, YOU'RE A GOOD KID.
LIKE THE LATE YAIBA...
WE CAN'T LET YOU LIVE.
(GATA (RATTLE)
...BUT.
GATA
GATA
...YOU'LL BECOME A DEVIL, WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT.
... EVENTUALLY YOU'LL STOP BEING WHO YOU ARE.


...
THANKS.
KIRIE-CHAN.
If I'm gonna end up a devil...
ZAA (RUSTLE)
...I'd rather be killed by Ayumu...
...is what I think.

WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT, WILL YOU REALLY KILL ME?
AYUMU ...
I WAS JUST SAYING THAT FOR SHOW.
KA (CLACK)
EVEN IF YOU WERE A TOTAL STRANGER ...
...I DON'T EVER WANT TO BECOME A MURDERER.
HAA (SIGH)
THAT'S WHY I'M ALWAYS TRYING TO THINK OF A WAY WE CAN AVOID HAVING THINGS REACH THAT POINT.
I SEE.

DON'T JUST LIE DOWN AND ACCEPT THAT YOU WERE BORN ONLY TO BE KILLED.
IF YOU HAVE A BRAIN TO USE, FIGURE OUT A WAY TO END THIS WITHOUT ANYBODY GETTING HURT.
AND YOU, STOP TALKING LIKE YOU'VE GIVEN UP AND THINK A LITTLE.
EVERYBODY GETTIN' ALONG AND BEIN' HAPPY, HAPPY, HAPPY!
KURURI (TWIRL)
...BY THE WAY, AYUMU...
I HEAR YOU, BUT...
...I'M WILLING TO BET WE'RE WRONG.
...YEAH, RIGHT. I DON'T THINK THE WORLD WORKS THAT WAY.

YOU'VE GOT A WICKED BAD REP IN CLASS.
I CAN UNDERSTAND THEM THINKIN' YOU'RE SCARY OR SNOBBY, BUT...
I DON'T TRUST NARUMI-KUN
...THERE'S TALK OF YOU BEIN' PART OF A SECRET SOCIETY...
...AND THAT'S WHY YOU GOT MIXED UP IN THAT INCIDENT.
YOU SORTA INVITED IT UPON YOURSELF, SO NOBODY'S GONNA SYMPATHIZE.
...IT'S NOT A COMPLETE MISUNDER-STANDING, BUT...
...IT STILL SUCKS THAT THAT'S HOW PEOPLE SEE ME.
IT'S NOT GOOD TO BUILD UP WALLS AROUND YOURSELF.
BE FRIENDLY.

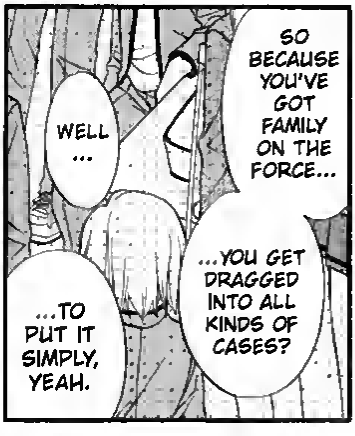
...I'LL TACKLE THAT IN THE FUTURE.
OH NO, YOU DON'T.
YOU'LL TACKLE IT STARTIN' TODAY!
ZA (RUSTLE)
ZA
ZA
KOOON
KAAAN (DAAANG)
KOOON (DOOONG)
KIIIN (DIIING)
TA (TAP)

SOROO (SNEAK)
I CAN'T STOP WORRYING ABOUT NARUMI-SAN AND HIZUMI-SAN.
IF I DON'T PUT MY FOOT DOWN, EVERYTHING WILL GO AT HIZUMI-SAN'S PACE.
NA-
NARUMI-SAN'S...
NA-
NA-

...FITTING IN!!?

JUST TODAY HE FIXED MY LUNCH FOR ME.

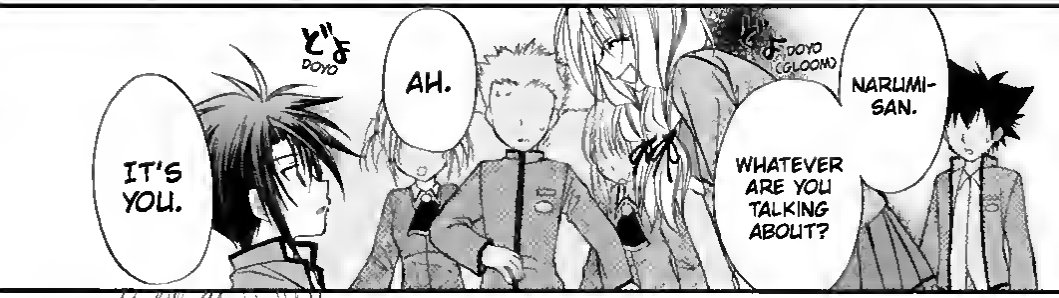
YOU USED TO SCARE ME, BUT...
...NOW THAT I'VE TALKED TO YOU, YOU'RE PRETTY NORMAL.
AYUMU'S A GOOD GUY.


SO BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT FAMILY ON THE FORCE...
...YOU GET DRAGGED INTO ALL KINDS OF CASES?
WELL ...
...TO PUT IT SIMPLY, YEAH.

...WOW, YOU'RE FULL OF SURPRISES, NARUMI-KUN, YOU KNOW THAT?
I TOTALLY THOUGHT YOU WERE BAD NEWS.
ME TOO.

NO WAY!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO MADE HIZUMI-KUN'S LUNCH TODAY, NARUMI-KUN!?
I...I TRIED A LITTLE, AND THAT CHICKEN RICE WAS AMAZING, YOU KNOW?

SEE ...
...YOU'RE ALWAYS WITH THE HEAD OF THE SCHOOL NEWSPAPER, RIGHT?
YEAH, YEAH
THERE ARE A LOT OF BAD RUMORS GOING AROUND ABOUT HER.
NOT EVEN THE TEACHERS CAN SAY ANYTHING AGAINST HER.
SHE'S SUPER-BAD NEWS.
IS SHE BLACKMAIL-ING YOU AND FORCING YOU TO HANG OUT WITH HER?
...IF I COULD, I'D CUT TIES WITH HER ASAP..
HA! (GASP)
IF THAT'S THE CASE, I'LL HELP YOU OUT!
...!!
JIN (MOVED)
...!!


どよ
DOYO
AH.
IT'S YOU.
どよ
DOYO (GLOOM)
NARUMI-SAN.
WHATEVER ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

!.
SO YOU'RE SAYING YOU'RE CASTING ME ASIDE...?
ガク
GAKU (COLLAPSE)
HA HAA ...
SO APPARENTLY THE MAIN CAUSE OF MY BAD REPUTATION IS YOU.

...HOLD IT.
ZAWA (MURMUR)
And after I even slit my wrist over you, Narumi-san...!
It's cruel.
Utterly so.
IT'S TRUE, THOUGH.
YOU'RE INVITING ANOTHER MISUNDER-STANDING.
DOYO (HORROR)
...AT THIS SCAR.
AS PROOF, LOOK...
SFX: SA (SLIDE)
...THIS PIGTAILED GIRL...
...SURE IS A PROBLEM FOR YOU, ISN'T SHE?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME TWICE.

COME ON.
GATA (CLATTER)
LET'S GO.
YOU CAME TO GET ME, DIDN'T YOU?
I'M A HINDRANCE, REMEMBER?
AND EVERYONE IN CLASS IS BEING AWFULLY NICE TO YOU.
EVEN IF THE WORLD TURNS ITS BACK ON ME, I'LL STILL BE THE STRONGEST SO LONG AS I HAVE YOU, RIGHT?
IT'S OBVIOUS WHICH I'D CHOOSE IF I HAD TO.

ZAWA ZAWA
ZAWA ZAWA
WELL, SORRY, BUT THIS IS WHERE I SPLIT.
HIZUMI ...
...PICK UP SOME ONIONS AND EGGS ON YOUR WAY HOME.
THEY SELL THEM CHEAP AT THE GROCERY STORE ACROSS FROM THE STATION
SURE THING.
WHAT'RE YOU MAKIN' FOR DESSERT TONIGHT?
LEMON CREAM TARTS.
THE SWEETNESS OF MERINGUE IS THE BEST.
PLEASE WAIT FOR ME, NARUMI-SAN!
NARUMI-KUN IS ...
...A MYSTERY ...!!
ARE YOU SURE IT'S OKAY?
YOU WERE HAVING A REALLY GOOD TIME WITH EVERYONE IN CLASS.

IT'S FINE.
I'M SURE THAT MY WISH...
...WON'T BE GRANTED THERE!
...JUST AS I THOUGHT, AYUMU...
...SURE IS STRONG...

GYU (SQUISH)
...
HIZUMI
...
...THE AIR ABOUT YOU'S CHANGED A BIT SINCE BEFORE
...
YOU'VE...
...ACCEPTED YOUR FATE, AND YET... WHAT ARE YOU AND AYUMU-KUN...
...REALLY AFTER?

SIS...
...THIS IS THE LITTLE BROTHER OF THE DEVIL, THE ONE WHO'S SUPPOSED TO OPPOSE ME.
HIZUMI MIZUSHIRO.
CHAPTER SIXTY
AND MY FEAR IS GREAT
PEKO (BOW)
I'M HIZUMI MIZUSHIRO.
PLEASURE.
I ONLY WORKED WITH YOUR HUSBAND FOR ABOUT A MONTH, SO I MIGHT NOT KNOW MUCH, BUT...
...I'LL GLADLY SHARE WHATEVER I DO KNOW.
PASA (RUSTLE)
...IF THERE'S ANYTHING YOU WANT TO ASK HIM, YOU SHOULD.
HE'S BEEN WORKING WITH MY BROTHER UNTIL JUST RECENTLY, SO...

CHAPTER SIXTY

AND MY FEAR IS GREAT

YOU'RE LIVING TOGETHER AT OUR PLACE...?
...SOUNDS LIKE ANOTHER HANDFUL.
I DON'T THINK IT'S THAT TIRESOME.
SFX: HAA (SIGH)
YOU ARE WHO YOU ARE, BUT...
...AYUMU'S AYUMU.
ARE YOU REALLY FINE LIVING TOGETHER?
IT'S BETTER THAN LIVING WITH YOU, SIS.
IT'S TOUGH LIVIN' WITH YOUR FIRST LOVE.
GOES AGAINST ALL LOGIC

THAT'S NOT THE TOUGH PART.
IT'S MY SIS'S INABILITY TO DO HOUSE-WORK.
I CAN EASILY RELY ON YOU FOR THAT.
YOU MAY SAY I'M RELIABLE, BUT...
... ANYBODY CAN DO WHAT I CAN, YOU KNOW?
FOR YOUR INFOR-MATION ...
...MY SIS IS THE KIND OF PERSON TO MISTAKE SUGAR FOR SALT WHEN SHE COOKS.
WHOA!
YOU MEAN LIKE THE SLAPSTICK CHARACTER IN OLD COMICS!?
ARGH!
QUIT TALKING ABOUT PEOPLE'S EMBARRASS-ING MOMENTS IN PUBLIC!
ZAAAAA (WSHHH)

SO...
...HIZUMI-KUN...
...WHAT ARE YOU PLOTTING?
YOU SURE DON'T BEAT AROUND THE BUSH.
THAT PIGTAILED GIRL SEEMED SUSPICIOUS OF ME TOO, BUT...
...THERE'S NO "PLOT" HERE.
I'M NOT AIMIN' TO BE A BAD GUY LIKE THAT.
SO WHEN YOU ACT SO SUSPI-CIOUSLY...
...DO YOU REALLY THINK I CAN BELIEVE YOU'RE NOT UP TO ANYTHING?
YOU'RE A KEY FIGURE IN THIS DISGUSTINGLY ORDERLY MAP OF FATE.
SFX: DOKA (THUD)

I DON'T THINK WHAT I'M DOIN' CAN BE CALLED SUSPICIOUS.
PIRI (PEEL)
AND IT'S NOT ME WHO HOLDS THE KEY TO ALL THIS—IT'S AYUMU.
MAFU (CHOMP)
AFTER ALL, I'M DESTINED TO BE KILLED BY AYUMU.
THERE'S NOTHIN' I CAN DO ABOUT IT.
...IF I HAD TO SAY...
...AYUMU'S THE ONE PERSON ON EARTH WHO UNDERSTANDS ME BEST.
...IT'D BE FUN TO SPEND THE REMAINDER OF MY LIFE WITH AYUMU.
EVEN IF HE ENDS UP KILLIN' ME...
THAT'S ALL I WAS THINKIN'.

ZA (RUSTLE)
...HOW MUCH OF THIS SCENARIO DO YOU BELIEVE?
...SIS ...
THIS SCENARIO?
HIRA (FLOAT)
HOW MUCH OF THAT DO YOU BELIEVE?
THIS FANTASY THAT REVOLVES AROUND A PAIR OF CREATORS AND THEIR PAWNS YAIBA MIZUSHIRO AND KIYOTAKA NARUMI.

IT'S NOT SOMETHING TO MAKE LIGHT OF, YOU UNDERSTAND?
EVEN IF YOU CALL IT THAT, YOU'RE THE ALL-IMPORTANT MAIN CHARACTER.
A FANTASY.
...HUH.
...I GET IT NOW.
SOMETIMES PEOPLE BELIEVE IN UNCERTAIN THINGS WITHOUT TANGIBLE PROOF.
YOU CAN CALL IT "BELIEF" OR "SUPERSTI-TION" IF YOU LIKE.
THAT'S A KIND OF "FAITH," DON'T YOU AGREE?

THINK ABOUT IT.
GHOSTS.
CURSES.
HORO-SCOPES.
NONE OF THESE HAVE SCIENTIFIC BACKING.
BUT LOTS OF PEOPLE FEEL A VAGUE APPREHENSION ABOUT THEM.
AND LOOKING BACK AT HISTORY ...
...YOU CAN FIND EXAMPLES OF HOW THESE UNCERTAIN BELIEFS HAVE IGNITED WARS.
YAIBA MIZUSHIRO AND KIYOTAKA NARUMI MADE CONCRETE FEAR OUT OF VAGUE APPREHENSION.

NO MATTER WHAT IT IS...
...AS LONG AS THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO FEEL FEAR...
...YOU CAN'T RESOLVE ANYTHING BY JUST REFUTING THEIR BELIEF AS A FANTASY.
BECAUSE IT CARRIES REAL POWER.
GUSHA (CRUSH)
THAT'S TRUE.
EVEN IF THAT WHOLE STORY IS NOTHING MORE THAN A FAIRY TALE...
...THERE ARE STILL PLENTY OF PEOPLE WHO FEAR THE BLADE CHILDREN.
AND EVEN IF THE CHILDREN DON'T UNDERGO ANY CHANGES AND MATURE INTO REGULAR ADULTS...
...THOSE WHO BELIEVE AND ARE FEARFUL ...
...WILL SUSPECT THAT THE CHILDREN ARE UP TO SOME-THING...
...AND WILL TRY TO WIPE THEM OUT WHETHER THEY'VE COMMITTED A CRIME OR NOT.

YEAH.
THERE'S NO REASON OR SENSE TO IT.
...AM SUSPICIOUS OF THIS BOY RIGHT NOW?
...LIKE HOW I...
...AND DRIVE ME TO KILL HIZUMI.
...THEY'LL KILL ALL THE BLADE CHILDREN ...
IF THEY THINK IT'S THE RIGHT MOVE...
SFX: KOTO (THMP)
...IF THEY TOOK YOUR SISTER HOSTAGE AND PRESSURED YOU TO KILL ME...
...YOU'D DO IT NO MATTER WHAT, RIGHT?
NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU DON'T LIKE IT...
... PROB-ABLY.

THE SAVERS, HUNTERS, AND WATCHERS ...
...WOULD BE READY TO DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
EVEN IF IT'S NOT YOUR SISTER...
...AND SOME TOTALLY UNRELATED PERSON IS TAKEN HOSTAGE, IT'D BE THE SAME THING.
SUKKU (STAND)
THAT'S HOW STRONGLY THEY BELIEVE IN YAIBA AND KIYOTAKA'S BLOOD.
THAT MIGHT SOUND LIKE FANTASY, BUT...
... THERE'S NO PROOF TO NECESSARILY BACK UP THAT OPINION EITHER.
...HAVE ALL KINDS OF PROOF TO BACK THEM UP.
ON THE OTHER HAND, THE CURSE OF THE BLOOD AND REALITY OF FATE...

WHAT THE BLADE CHILDREN HAVE DONE.
WHAT YAIBA'S DONE.
WHAT KIYOTAKA'S DONE.
AND YOU AND I.
IT'S A FATE SO BEAUTIFULLY COMPOSED, IT'S SCARY.
...IT'S UP TO YOU IF YOU WANT TO RESIST THAT.
... AYUMU ...

WHEN I BECOME THE DEVIL AND ALL THE BLADE CHILDREN HIT TWENTY, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE COULD BE KILLED IN SECONDS.
SOCIETY WOULD BE DEALT SUCH A BLOW IT MIGHT NEVER RECOVER.
...DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA OF THE SACRIFICES THAT WILL BE MADE?
BUT IF YOU LET THE BLADE CHILDREN AND ME GO ON LIVIN' ...
...AND THIS SO-CALLED FANTASY OF YOURS BECOMES REALITY IN THE FUTURE...
...YOU CAN'T GET BACK WHAT'S ALREADY BEEN LOST.
EVEN IF YOU KILL US THEN...
...CAN YOU TAKE RESPON-SIBILITY FOR SUCH A CRIME?

ZABABA (SPLOOSH)
IF YOU WOULD JUST KILL US NOW...
...
THERE'D BE NOTHING TO FEAR.
EVEN IF OUR FATE AND THE CURSE ARE A LIE...
...WITH US DEAD, NOBODY WOULD EVER BE ABLE TO PROVE THAT.
YOU WOULD BE IN THE RIGHT FOREVER.
THERE'D BE NOBODY TO BLAME YOU FOR HAVIN' DONE WRONG AFTER THE FACT.
...I THINK MY BROTHER WOULD BLAME ME.
...
PATHETIC.

ARE YOU HOLDING OUT FOR SOME KIND OF HOPE?
AYUMU.
BOFU. (POOMPH)
...
BE STRONG ENOUGH NOT TO LET KIYOTAKA'S WORDS BOTHER YOU.
IT'S A SYSTEM OF FATE DESIGNED WITHOUT ANY MARGIN FOR ERROR, INCLUDING WHAT'S INSIDE YOU, YOU SEE?
ZA
ZA (RUSTLE)
...IS A "FAITH" THAT FOLLOWS NO LOGIC OR COMMON SENSE.
WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO FIGHT...
...THOSE YOU'RE UP AGAINST WON'T TURN FROM THEIR BELIEFS SO EASILY.
PASHI (SNATCH)
NO MATTER WHAT CONTRA-DICTIONS YOU FIND ...
...
EVEN IF THAT FATE IS ALL A BIG LIE ...
..."FAITH" CAN'T CRUMBLE.

THEY'VE ALREADY KILLED DOZENS OF US CHILDREN.
THEY'RE NOT ABOUT TO ACCEPT THAT THEY'VE BEEN WRONG.
THEY DON'T WANT TO THINK OF THEMSELVES AS CHILD MURDERERS.
ALL THEY CAN DO IS BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE RIGHT AND WIPE OUT EVERY LAST CHILD.
PARA (CRUMBLE)
AND IF IT'S ALL TRUE...

SFX: KUSHA (CRUSH)

...YOU TWO ARE NOTHING MORE THAN COGS OF FATE.
NO MATTER HOW STRONG YOU ARE ...
...YOU DON'T HAVE THE POWER TO GO AGAINST WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DECIDED.

I KNOW THAT RESISTANCE IS FUTILE.
JUST LIKE YOU SAID BEFORE.
IF I KILLED YOU...
...FATE WOULD BECOME A LIE.
BUT AT THE SAME TIME, MY ABSOLUTENESS WOULD ALSO BECOME A LIE...
...AND I'D BE KILLED BY THOSE WHO BELIEVE ME TO BE DANGEROUS.
BUT IF FATE IS ACTUALLY TRUE...
...THEN I CAN'T ESCAPE DEATH BY YOUR HAND.
MY OPTIONS AREN'T REALLY OPTIONS.
BOTH END UP WITH ME DEAD.

...THERE IS NO HOPE.
FROM A LOGICAL STAND-POINT...
YOU MUST SEE.
AND YOUR CHOICES ARE TOO LIMITED.
EITHER SETTLE THIS QUICKLY WITH MINIMAL CASUALTIES.
OR CONTINUE AGONIZIN' TILL THE LOSSES ARE GREATER.
...THAT'S HOW IT IS.
HYU (WHIP)
...DON'T RUSH YOURSELF.
PASHI (CATCH)

I DON'T KNOW IF THERE'S ANY HOPE OR NOT.
BUT THERE'S SOMETHING I CAN'T IGNORE ABOUT THIS RIDICULOUS SITUATION.
WE'VE BEEN BOUND HAND AND FOOT...
...BUT THE CHAINS THAT BIND US...
...HAVE SOMETHING ILLOGICAL ABOUT THEM.
I CAN SEE A TINY CHINK IN THEM.

IF WE REALLY COULDN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE SCENARIO LAID OUT BEFORE US...
...THEN YOU WOULDN'T BE HERE PLANNING SOMETHING, NOW WOULD YOU?
YEAH.
THERE'S SOMETHING ILLOGICAL ABOUT YOU TOO.
...SO YOU DOUBT MY INTENTIONS TOO?
SUI (SWISH)
...UP YOUR SLEEVE.
K-S (RUSTLE)
YOU'RE HIDING SOME-THING...

BE IT FATE OR FAITH...
...THE TINIEST FRACTURE WILL DO.
SORRY ABOUT THAT!
HYU (FWIP)
I'LL FORCE IT OPEN...
...AND PULL OUT A SOLID HOPE FOR EVERY-ONE.

...IS AN UNMAN-AGEABLE MONSTER ...
...IT'S NOT MY FAULT, 'KAY?
...IF WHAT YOU PULL OUT...

ZAAAAA (WHSHHH)
.....
TELL ME...
... HIZUMI-KUN...
...WAS KIYOTAKA-SAN...
...DOING WELL?
YEAH.
HE WAS FINE.
SFX: DOKA (THUD)
HE'D OFTEN LOOK AT PHOTOS OF YOU...
...AND SIGH SADLY.

THAT'S GOOD.
WELL.
.....
.....
I SWEAR ...
WHATEVER HE'S PLANNING ...
...I JUST DON'T GET IT.

A WOMAN LIKE YOUR SISTER MADOKA...
...IS WAY TOO GOOD FOR KIYOTAKA.
WHAT'S SHE SEE IN HIM ANYWAY?
BATA (FLAP)
BATA
MY SIS SAYS SHE'S ALWAYS HAD POOR TASTE IN PICKING MEN.
BATA
SO IN OTHER WORDS, THAT'S...
...ALSO FATE.
KASHA (CLANG)
...I GUESS SO.

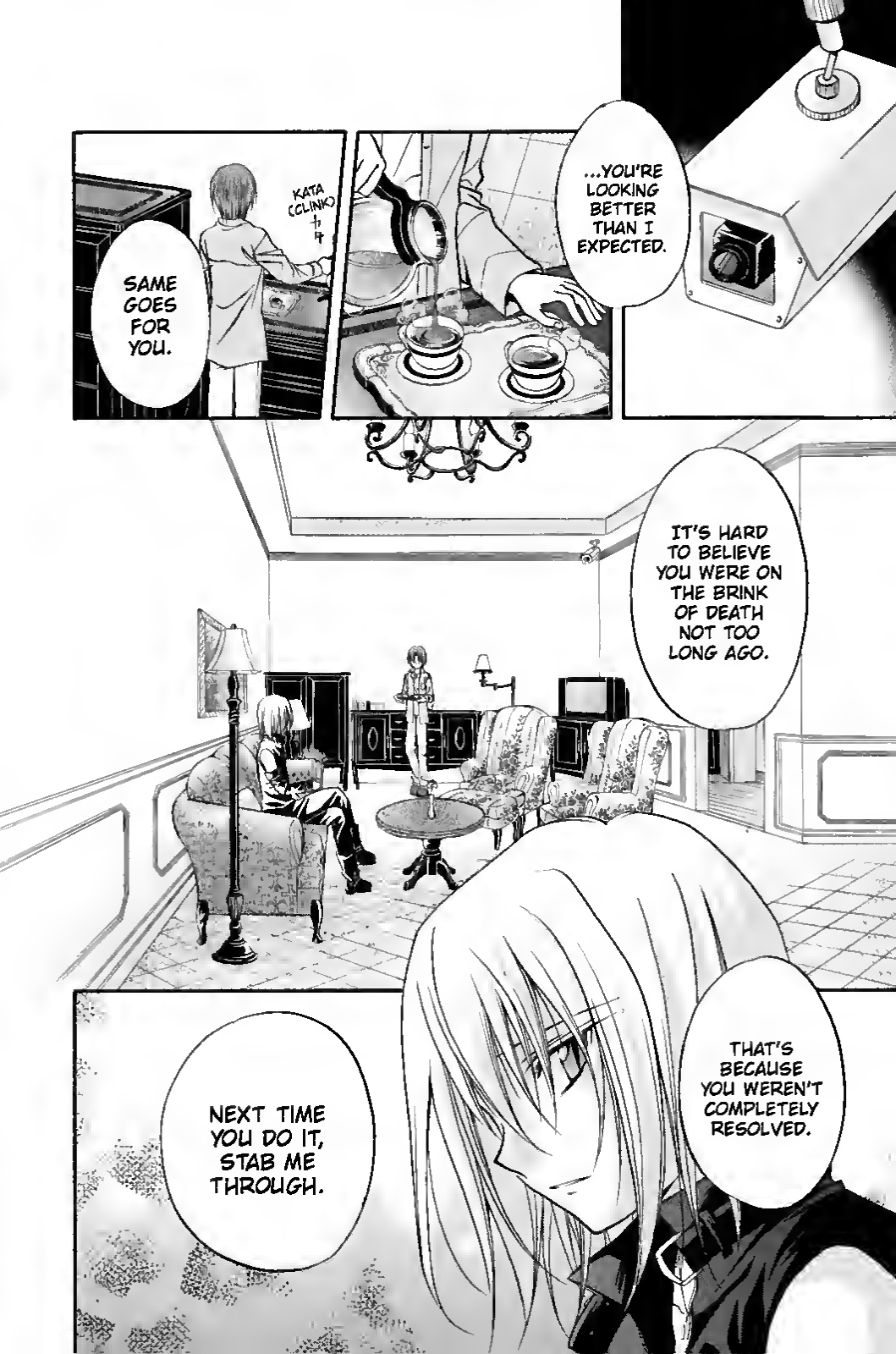
LIKE THE SUN SETTING, MAILBOXES BEING RED...
...AND KITCHEN KNIVES CUTTING WELL, THAT'S HOW THINGS ARE FATED TO BE.
BUT IF YOU DON'T SHARPEN THE KNIFE, IT WON'T CUT WELL, RIGHT?
AND IF YOU PAINT MAILBOXES YELLOW, THEY WON'T BE RED ANYMORE.
IF YOU DID THAT, THE POST OFFICE WOULD BE PRETTY PISSED.
AND IF THEY GOT SO UPSET THEY DIDN'T SEND YOU PACKAGES ANYMORE, YOU'D BE IN A SPOT.
THAT'S FATE TOO.
AWW ...
FATE'S A SCARY THING.

...HEY.
AYUMU.
I'M NOT HOPIN' FOR ANYTHIN' SO OUTRAGEOUS ...
...AS MY FATE, CHANGIN', OKAY?
MY PLAN IS ON A MUCH SMALLER SCALE.
I CAN TELL A LIE, BUT...
...I WON'T STAB YOU IN THE BACK.

NO USE RUSHIN' THINGS, RIGHT?
...LET'S ENJOY OUR SCHOOL LIFE TOGETHER.
WELL ...
... EITHER WAY...
HEH...
EVEN IF YOU SAY THAT, THE WAY YOU CARRY YOURSELF ...
...I DON'T THINK I CAN VERY WELL RELAX AROUND YOU, YOU KNOW?

...GOOD POINT.
WE BOTH MIGHT HAVE TO BE...
...PATIENT A LITTLE WHILE LONGER, EH?

CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE
A WALK IN THE SUN


KATA (CLINK)
SAME GOES FOR YOU.
...YOU'RE LOOKING BETTER THAN I EXPECTED.
IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE YOU WERE ON THE BRINK OF DEATH NOT TOO LONG AGO.
THAT'S BECAUSE YOU WEREN'T COMPLETELY RESOLVED.
NEXT TIME YOU DO IT, STAB ME THROUGH.

...
SHEESH.
IF I'D STABBED YOU THROUGH, I'D BE SLEEPING PEACEFULLY NOW.
...IS IT REALLY ...
...THAT PAINFUL?
.....
ALL I HAVE ARE NIGHT-MARES...

IT FEELS LIKE I'M BEING DESTROYED FROM THE INSIDE OUT...
ZURU (SLIP)
PASHA (SPLASH)
I'M ALMOST TEMPTED TO DO MYSELF IN.
LIKE BEING STABBED IN THE STOMACH WITH A KNIFE.
YOU'RE STRONG.
.....
SU (SSK)

YOU BELIEVE IN WHAT YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T HOPE FOR.
YOU CAN WITHSTAND BOTH THE NIGHT-MARES AND REALITY.
YOU COULD COPE WITH THEM TOO.
... THAT'S NOT TRUE.
BESIDES, THE TRULY STRONG ONE...
.....
...IS AYUMU NARUMI.
...DON'T WORRY.

SO LONG AS AYUMU-KUN DOESN'T GIVE UP, I'LL STAY ALIVE.
THAT'S MY OBLIGATION FOR LOSING AGAINST HIM.
AND...
...IT'S ALSO MY OBLIGATION FOR FAILING TO KILL YOU.
...SORRY.

WHEN ALL'S LOST, I'LL KILL YOU.
THERE YOU GO, PUSHING YOURSELF AGAIN.
GOSHI (WIPE)
...BY THE WAY.
I HEARD THAT HIZUMI AND AYUMU-KUN MADE CONTACT ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO.
HOW ARE THEY DOING NOW?
.....
!
IS THE SITUATION THAT DANGEROUS ALREADY?

IT SEEMS THEY'RE ENJOYING THEIR SCHOOL LIFE TOGETHER.
.....
KACHA COLINK?
カチャ…
.....
.....
...HUH?

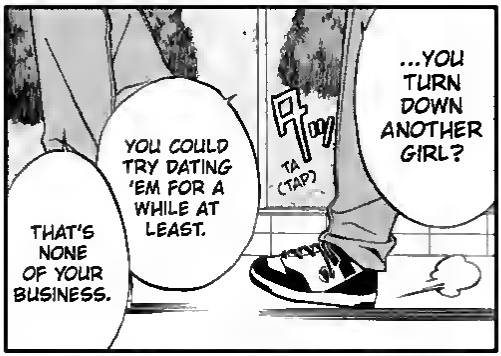
NA-
NARUMI-KUN!
UM...
PLEASE GO OUT WITH ME!!
(PORI (SCRATCH)
AND BRINGING YOU OUT HERE...
SORRY THIS IS SO ABRUPT ...
...NARUMI-KUN.
.....
BUT SHE'S A FRIEND OF MINE FROM THE TEAM, AND...
SORRY.
UHHH...

I APPRECIATE YOUR FEELINGS, BUT...
...I...
...DON'T HAVE TIME FOR A RELATION-SHIP RIGHT NOW.
SO THOSE RUMORS THAT YOU'RE GOING OUT WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE SCHOOL NEWSPAPER ARE—
NOT TRUE.
NOT TRUE AT ALL.
キッパリ
SFX. KIPPARI (BLUNT)
NARUMI-KUN...
...A LOT OF GIRLS HAVE ASKED YOU OUT LATELY, BUT...
...YOU'VE TURNED THEM ALL DOWN IMMEDIATELY, HUH?
I HEARD FROM HIZUMI-KUN THAT...
...YOUR HEART WAS BROKEN NOT TOO LONG AGO, AND YOU DON'T HAVE IT IN YOU TO GO OUT WITH ANYBODY NOW...
...THAT IDIOT.
HIM AND HIS BIG MOUTH...
!
THEN IT'S TRUE?

... WELL.
I'VE HAD IT PRETTY ROUGH.
SO, I'M SORRY.
I REALLY APPRECIATE THE THOUGHT, THOUGH.
HEYYY!
HEYYY!
AYUMUUUU!
OH! THERE YOU A—
UWAH!
DID I COME AT A BAD TIME?

SORRY TO BARGE IN LIKE THIS.
I'M IN A BIT OF A HURRY.
NO.
WE'RE FINISHED HERE.
OKAY.
YOU SEE...
...AYUMU...
WE'RE PLAYIN' A MATCH AGAINST THE BASKETBALL TEAM.
THE SCHOOL TEAM COMPETES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL.
A TEAM OF REGULAR JOES IS NO MATCH.
DON'T WORRY.
WE GOT THREE GUYS WHO'RE PRETTY TALL AND FAST ON THEIR FEET.
JOIN OUR SIDE.
...HOLD IT.
ADD YOU AND ME AND WE'LL BE UNSTOPPABLE.
PASHI (CLAMP)
NI (GRIN)

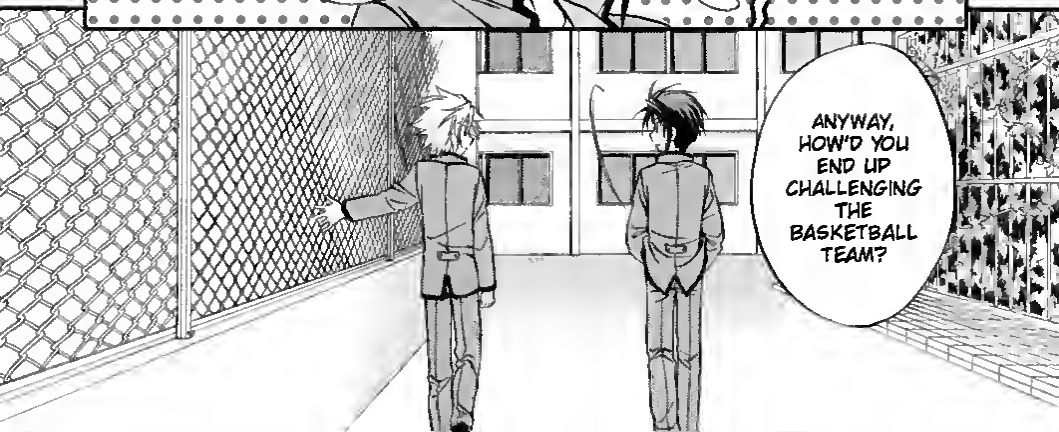
UH, HELLO?
I ONLY JUST GOT OFF MY CRUTCHES TWO DAYS AGO.
YOU NEVER LEARN
A BASKET-BALL GAME! I WANNA WATCH!
YOU KNOW I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO DO ANY STRENUOUS ACTIVITIES.
I'LL TAKE CARE OF SCORIN' ALL THE POINTS.
YOU JUST SET UP EVERYONE ELSE TO GIVE ME THE MOST OPENINGS.
IT'D BE TOO MUCH FOR ONE PERSON TO COME UP WITH THE PLAYS AND SCORE THE POINTS.
.....
FINE.
!
BUT YOU HAVE TO CLEAN THE BATHROOM FOR THE NEXT WEEK.
SURE THING!
THAT INCLUDES THE TOILET.
WELL ...
...I GOTTA GO.
SORRY.


...YOU TURN DOWN ANOTHER GIRL?
TA (TAP)
YOU COULD TRY DATING 'EM FOR A WHILE AT LEAST.
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.

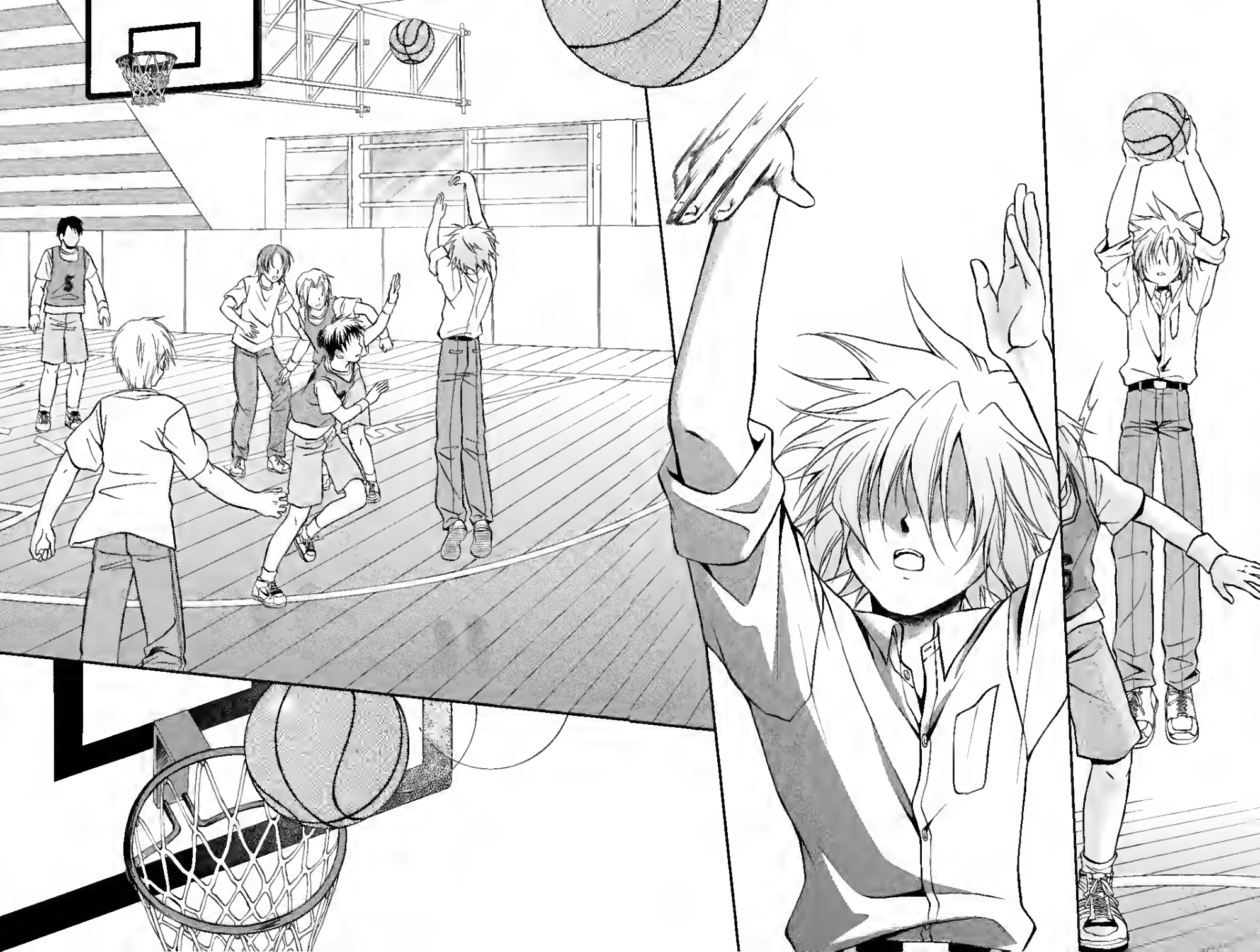
BUT GIRLS KEEP COMIN' TO ASK ME WHY...
...YOU'RE TURNIN' 'EM ALL DOWN.
AT LEAST TELLIN 'EM THE TRUTH GETS 'EM TO BACK OFF.

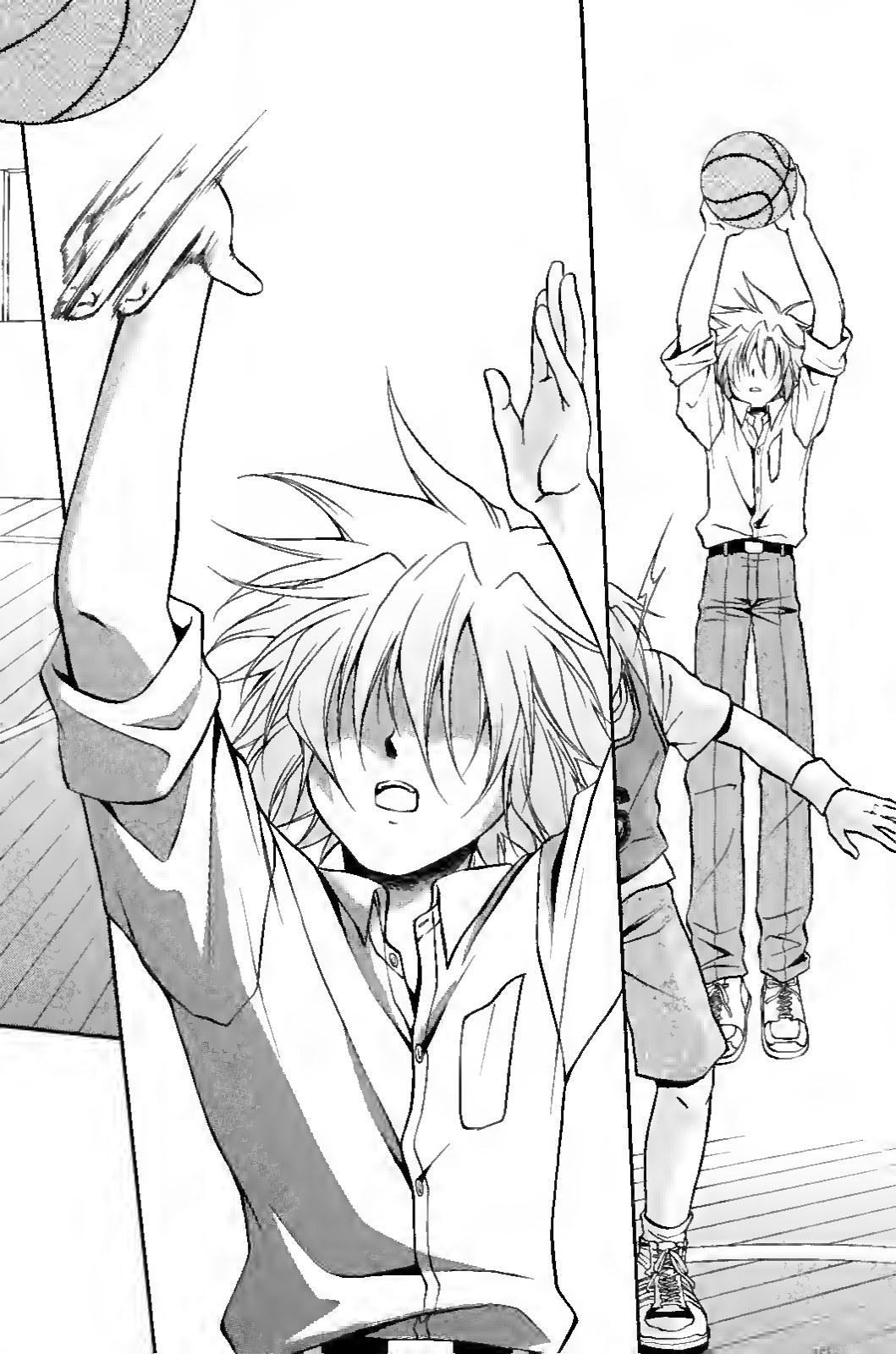
BISHI (SMACK)
AND ANOTHER THING.
QUIT BLABBING ABOUT MY BROKEN HEART.
OW!

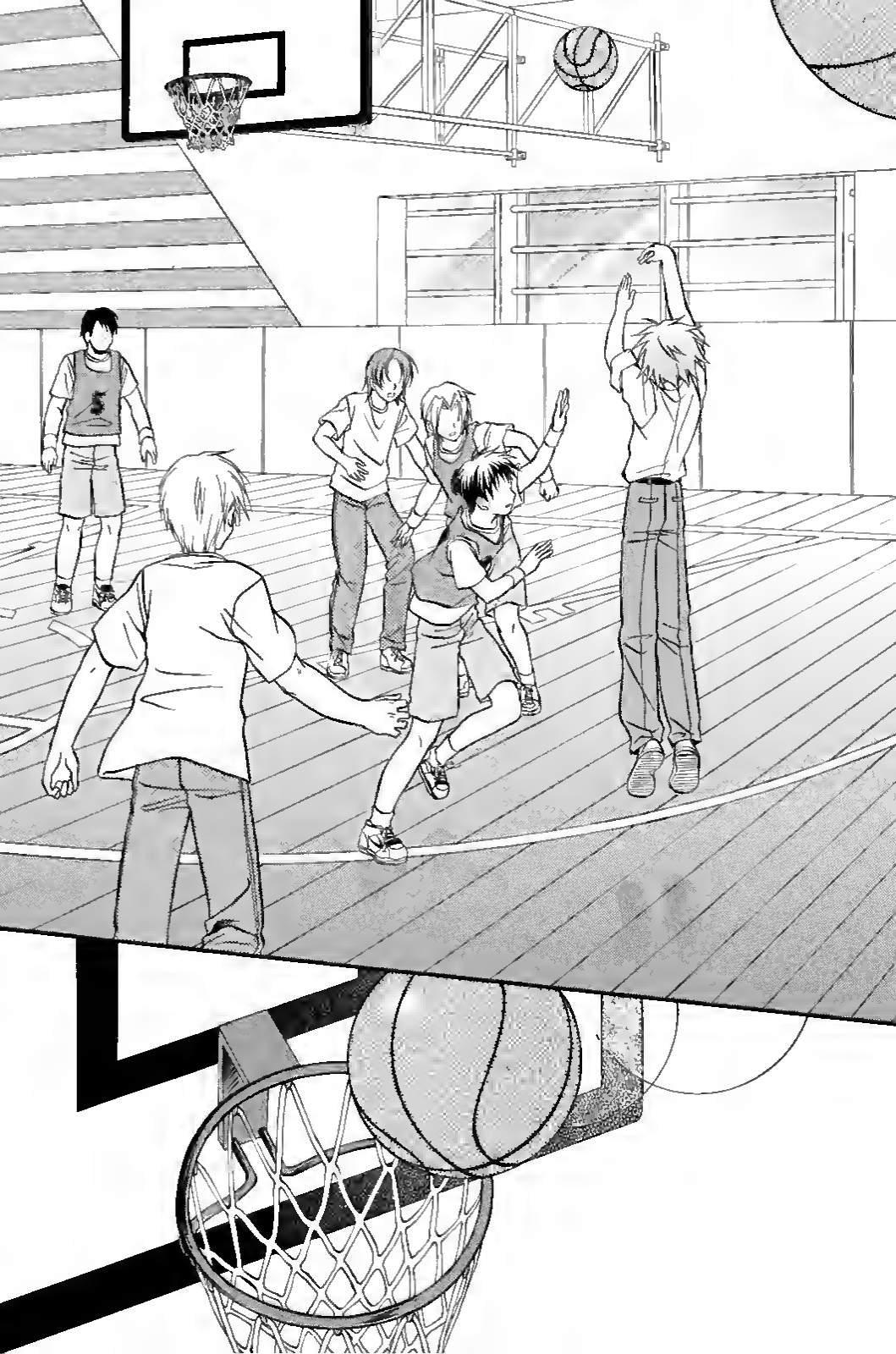
...I'M NOT REFUSING THEM BECAUSE OF MY SIS.
HAA (SIGH)


ANYWAY, HOW'D YOU END UP CHALLENGING THE BASKETBALL TEAM?

AND IF THE BASKETBALL TEAM WINS?
NOTHIN'.
.....
I NEVER TURN DOWN A WAGER.
IF I WIN, THEY'RE TREATIN' ME TO A BBQ DINNER.
BISHI (SMB)
IT'S NO BIG DEAL FOR THOSE GUYS TO BEAT NOVICES LIKE US.
WHAT'S THE POINT OF GIVIN' THEM SOMETHIN'?
...THE BASKETBALL TEAM...
...IS GONNA REGRET EVER MAKIN' THIS BET.







YEAH!
ZA (SHOOP)
IWA (CHEER)
THEY'VE TURNED THE TABLES!!

SUU (LIFT)
WAA
WAA
LOOK AT THAT!
I CAN SCORE FROM ANYWHERE IF I HAVE THE BALL!
JUST KEEP SENDIN' 'EM TO ME!
GOCHI (WHACK)
DON'T SAY THAT SO LOUD.
THEY'LL ONLY PUT UP A TIGHTER DEFENSE AROUND YOU.
DON'T DEPEND ON HIM TOO MUCH.
IF YOU SEE AN OPENING, GO FOR IT.
THERE THEY GO AGAIN, WRITING ANOTHER PAGE FOR THEIR ADOLESCENT ADVENTURE STORY.

YOU'RE KIRIE-SAN.
GOOD JOB KEEPING AN EYE ON THEM.
GOOD WORK ON YOUR END TOO.
ISN'T IT TOUGH STICKING YOUR NECK OUT FOR SOMETHING YOU HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH?
WELL.
I CAN'T BACK OUT NOW.
DAN
DAN
DAN (JUMP)
PASH! (CATCH)
...HOW HAVE THOSE TWO BEEN THESE PAST COUPLE OF WEEKS?

...NARUMI-SAN'S STOCK PRICE IS SKY-ROCKETING.
ZU (GLOOM)
ZU
ZU
...ANY WAY YOU LOOK AT IT...
I'VE READ THE REPORT, BUT...
...YOU SPEND A LOT OF TIME WITH AYUMU-KUN, RIGHT?
AND THAT HIZUMI-SAN'S ALWAYS WITH NARUMI-SAN, SO GIRLS ARE MAKING MOVES...
PASHI
...AND NARUMI-SAN'S BECOME THE CENTER OF EVERYBODY'S ATTENTION TOO.
HYU (WHIP)
WITH HIS SMARTS, ATHLETICISM, AND CHEERFUL PERSONALITY, HE BECAME POPULAR RIGHT OFF THE BAT.
PASHI
WITHIN TWO OR THREE DAYS AFTER TRANSFERRING HERE, HIZUMI-SAN WAS THE TALK OF THE SCHOOL.
...I KNOW THAT NARUMI-SAN'S COOL AND ISN'T A SLOUCH OR ANYTHING...
WAA
WAA (CHEER)
AND...

GATA (CLATTER)
ガタ
...BUT HE'S GOING TOO FAR THIS TIME!
HE'S TEACHING THE GIRLS IN HOME EC HOW TO BAKE PASTRIES!
I'M MOVED!!!
LOOKING OVER HIS CLASSMATES' HOMEWORK!!
PLAYING PIANO FOR THE PIANISTS IN THE MUSIC BAND.
PURU (TREMBLE)
TO TOP IT ALL OFF, DID YOU KNOW THAT THIS WEEK ALONE, THREE GIRLS HAVE ASKED NARUMI-SAN OUT!?
THREE!!
THERE'S A LIMIT TO THAT!!
GOSU (PUNCH)
UU (GROAN)
...HE'S ALWAYS HAD A SOFT SPOT, SO HE PROBABLY CAN'T REFUSE A REQUEST.

...IF AYUMU-KUN HADN'T HAD HIS PERSONALITY STIFLED SO MUCH BY KIYOTAKA, HE'D PROBABLY STAND OUT AS MUCH AS HIZUMI.
THANK-FULLY HE'S TURNED THEM ALL DOWN, BUT...
...IF SOMEBODY SHOWED UP WHOM HE AGREED TO DATE, THEN WHAT!!
PAN (SMACK)
HE ALWAYS LIVED IN THE SHADOWS UNTIL HIZUMI BROUGHT HIM OUT INTO THE SUN.
SO DON'T YOU FEEL LIKE HE CAN'T HELP BUT ENJOY THIS TRANSFORMA-TION?
HE HAS REALLY FALLEN RIGHT INTO HIZUMI'S HANDS...
.....
BUT AT THE SAME TIME, HE HASN'T.

PAN
GURU (TURN)
AYUMU-KUN SEEMS TO BE HAVING FUN, BUT...
...HE'S STILL HOLDING ON FIRMLY TO HIS ROOTS.
THERE'S EVEN A DISCERNIBLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIM AND HIZUMI-SAN.
PAN (SMACK)
HE'S GROWN CLOSER TO HIS CLASSMATES AND OTHER PEOPLE, BUT THERE'S A VERY OBVIOUS WALL BETWEEN THEM.
KYAA (SHRIEK)
GAKO (THUNK)
HYU (WHIP)
WAA (CHEER)
WAA (CHEER)

HALF TIME?
PI (TWEE)
PI
THAT'S GOOD FOR YOU.
WAA
WAA
...HE'S ALSO GENTLER AND MORE CIVIL TOWARD ME THAN BEFORE.
JUST THE OPPOSITE! IT FREAKS ME OUT!
PAN (SLAP)
FROM WHAT I SEE...
...IT'S NOT SO MUCH THAT NARUMI-SAN IS FALLING FOR HIZUMI-SAN'S WAYS...
...AS NARUMI-SAN IS SPOILING HIZUMI-SAN.
SIGNS: BASKETBALL TEAM / HIZUMI & CO.
3 6
3 9

...HEY.
AREN'T YOU WORRIED ABOUT HOW THIS IS GOING?
I'VE NEVER SEEN A KID WHO CAN PLAY LIKE HIZUMI, EVEN AT THE NATIONAL TOURNAMENT.
WE HAVE TO KEEP HIM IN CHECK.
NO.
IF WE WANT TO TAKE BACK CONTROL OF THIS MATCH...
...THEN THE ONE WE SHOULD KEEP AN EYE ON IS THAT NARUMI KID.
WH-WHO'S THE GIRL WHO ASKED NARUMI OUT?
THAT ONE
OOOH, SHE'S A LOOKER.
HE'S THE ONE CALLING THE PLAYS TO GIVE HIZUMI THE OPENINGS.

CAN'T YOU TELL?
KYU (TWIST)
IT'S AS THOUGH ...
...HE CAN READ ALL OF OUR MOVES AND HIZUMI'S TO INTERCEPT OUR PASSES AND GET THE BALL TO HIZUMI.
IF IT WEREN'T FOR NARUMI ...
...HIZUMI WOULDN'T GET TO SHOOT LIKE HE DOES.
BUT...
NARUMI'S CONTROLLING THE CURRENT OF THIS GAME.
.....
PASA (PWAP)
...HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO STOP HIM...?
I GOTTA SAY, YOU WERE AMAZING ...
... NARUMI.

CAN YOU READ EVERYONE'S MOVES?
IT'S ALL HIZUMI.

WHEN WE FOLLOW YOUR CALLS, MOST OF OUR PASSES GET THROUGH.
WE'RE ACTUALLY WINNING.

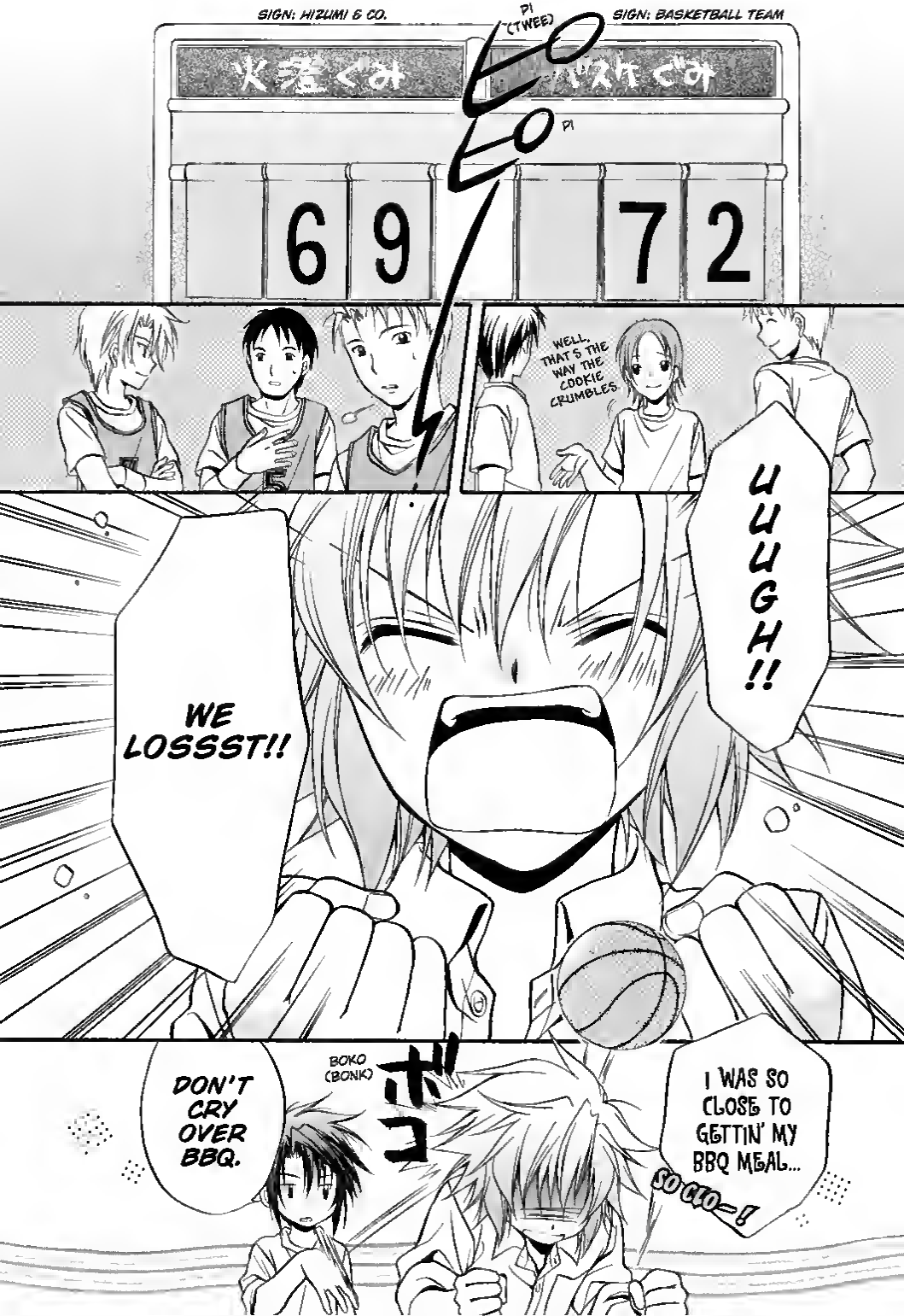
HE'S TOO GOOD, SO OUR OPPONENTS FOCUS ON HIM.

THAT'S WHY THEY LEAVE OPENINGS ON THE COURT...
...AND WE AIM FOR THOSE WHEN WE PASS.
HIZUMI'S THE ONE WHO CAN GET THE BALL AND MAKE A BASKET EVEN WHEN THEY'RE ALL OVER HIM.
OUR WINNING IS JUST A RESULT OF HIS SKILL.

BUT...
...EVEN THOUGH YOU AND HIZUMI AREN'T COMMUNICATING DIRECTLY, IT'S LIKE YOU'RE ON THE SAME WAVELENGTH.

MIGHT AS WELL BE HIZUMI PLAYING BY HIMSELF.

...TO TELL WHERE HIZUMI WANTS TO PASS, YOU KNOW?
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS LOOK AT THE GENERAL FLOW...
?
BUT...
HIZUMI'S INCREDIBLE, BUT...
...ISN'T NARUMI JUST AS OUTSTAND-ING?
SIGNS: BASKETBALL TEAM / HIZUMI & CO.
IT WOULD BE WRONG...
...A MAKESHIFT TEAM SHOULDN'T WIN AGAINST THE BASKETBALL TEAM...


SIGN: HIZUMI & CO.
PI (TWEE)
SIGN: BASKETBALL TEAM
PI
69
72
WELL, THAT'S THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBLES.
UUUGH!!
WE LOSSST!!
BOKO (BONK)
DON'T CRY OVER BBQ.
I WAS SO CLOSE TO GETTIN' MY BBQ MEAL...
SOCLO-!

IF YOU WANT SOMETHING GOOD, I'LL COOK IT.
THAT'S NO GOOD!
YOUR COOKIN' IS TASTY. BUT IT'S TOO HEALTHY!
IT'S NOT REFRESHIN'!
SOMETIMES I WANNA STUFF MY FACE WITH SOMETHIN' FILLIN' AND FATTY!
HA HA HA!
THAT'LL JUST MAKE YOU FAT.
NOT IF I WORK OUT LIKE THIS!
KORO (ROLL) KORO
...DID NARUMI PURPOSELY OBSTRUCT HIZUMI'S MOVES...?
...AT THE VERY END...
THAT WAS CLOSE.
YEAH ...

GOOD WORK!
...ACTUALLY WORRIED ABOUT OUR REPUTATION ...?
WAS HE...
YOU'RE A LIFE-SAVER.
THANKS.
...YOU WERE WITH THAT WATCHER, KIRIE, RIGHT?
...BY THE WAY, DURING THE MATCH...

TON (TAP)
...I'M STILL HERE.
YOU SEEMED TO BE HAVING AN AWFULLY GOOD TIME.
BUT I DIDN'T COME TO WATCH SOME TEENAGE COMEDY.
...IF THAT'S ALL THIS LOOKS LIKE TO YOU, THEN YOU SHOULD GET YOUR EYES CHECKED.

HEY.
AYUMU!
TA (TMP)
...I'M GOING TO PLUNGE MY HAND INTO THE DARKNESS WITHIN HIZUMI.
SOON ...
GU (GRIP)
I'M ONTO SOME-THING.
I JUST KNOW IT.

SOON ...
GU (GRIP)
I'M ONTO SOME-THING.
I JUST KNOW IT.

...I'M GOING TO PLUNGE MY HAND INTO THE DARKNESS WITHIN HIZUMI.
HEY.
AYUMU!
TA (THUD)

AT LEAST SAY GOOD-BYE TO YOUR FANS AND THE REST OF THE PLAYERS.
YOU HAD SOME SECRET ADMIRERS.
THERE YOU GO, RUNNIN' OFF BY YOURSELF AGAIN.
BUT ANYWAY THAT MATCH!
!
...YOU'RE HOPELESS.
I RAN OFF BECAUSE THAT'S TOO MUCH OF A HASSLE.
I GOT TIRED.
THAT'S WHY WE LOST.
YOU EASED UP AT THE END, DIDN'T YOU?

IF YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE SOME GREAT DEMON, THEN USE YOUR POWER TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT YOURSELF.
WHEN A GOD LIKE YOU INTERFERES, THERE'S NO HOPE OF ME WINNIN'.
OOPS
PASA (SWAP)
ZURU (SLIP)

AYUMU'S TOUGH.
I'M REALLY NOT JOKIN'.
...KIRIE-CHAN.
LOOKS LIKE I'M IN FOR TROUBLE.
BASA (FWAP)

JUST WHAT ARE THOSE TWO THINKING !!? ...?
WHAT ...?
KON (THINK)
コン

...I KNEW IT.

...I'LL HAVE TO THROW MY WHOLE SELF INTO THE CHALLENGE.
IF I REALLY WANT THIS...
WAIT UP FOR ME!
Spiral THE BONDS OF REASONING 12 THE END

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

NEXT SPIRAL PREVIEW
IF YOU KEEP GETTIN' INVOLVED ...
...PIG-TAILS ...
...YOU WILL INEVITABLY GET YOURSELF HURT.
HE CAN'T DO ANYTHING BY HIS OWN POWER.
HE'S WITNESSED DESPAIR LIKE I NEVER HAVE.
BEHOLD THE ONE DOUBT AYUMU'S ARRIVED AT...!!
WHY HAS HIZUMI SO READILY ACCEPTED HIS FATE?
AYUMU BEGINS TO SUSPECT THAT HIS BROTHER AND HIZUMI ARE HIDING IMPORTANT INFORMATION FROM HIM THAT COULD DECIDE THEIR FATE AND ARE DECEIVING EVERYONE. HE ENTRUSTS THE WATCHER KIRIE TSUCHIYA WITH A GRAIN OF HOPE. IT'S AYUMU'S WILL TO DEFY FATE, EVEN IF IT MEANS DENYING WHAT SUPPORTS HIS VERY EXISTENCE...

IS HE REALLY ...
...YAIBA MIZU-SHIRO'S LITTLE BROTHER?
... MIZUMI MIZU-SHIRO.
...I'D SAY IT'S BEING DEVOURED BY THAT MONSTER.
IF I HAD TO...
...SAY WHAT I THINK MY HOPE IS...
THAT IS...
IF YOU HAVE HOPE, THEN SAY EXACTLY WHAT IT IS.
JUST WHAT ARE YOU HOLDING OUT FOR?
AM I REALLY KIYOTAKA NARUMI'S LITTLE BROTHER?
...A TERRIFYING, CRUEL THESIS!!!
WHAT ARE YOU—
AND ME.
TO BE CONTINUED IN VOLUME 13 OF "SPIRAL: THE BONDS OF REASONING"!!

To be continued. Please wait !

Spiral Work Diary

~THE HIZUMI-KUN DEBUT VOLUME~

THIS WAS A CONVERSATION I HAD WITH THE EDITOR BACK WHEN I INTRODUCED HIZUMI FOR THE FIRST TIME...

HAAH?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

But Hizumi's doesn't seem to have anything behind it.

Kanon's smile always had something implicated in it.

Etc, etc

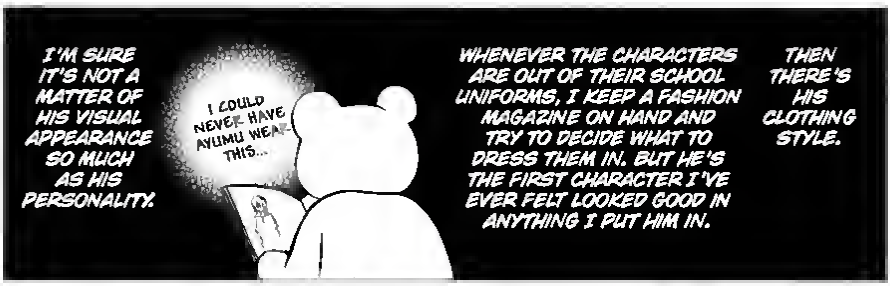
I WONDER ABOUT THAT...

...SO IN THIS VOLUME'S SEGMENT, I'M GOING TO FOCUS ON HIZUMI.

I DIDN'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE, SO I TRIED A SKETCHY GRADATION LOOK, BUT I THINK IT LOOKS FINE THE WAY IT DOES, DON'T YOU...?

THIS IS WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE WHITE

SINCE HIZUMI IS AYUMU'S OPPOSING FORCE, I WENT WITH AN OPPOSING PALETTE AND MADE HIS HAIR WHITE, WHICH IS THE OPPOSITE OF AYUMU'S. HOWEVER, EYES ALREADY HAD THAT GOING FOR HIM TOO...


I'M SURE IT'S NOT A MATTER OF HIS VISUAL APPEARANCE SO MUCH AS HIS PERSONALITY.
I COULD NEVER HAVE AYUMU WEAR THIS...
WHENEVER THE CHARACTERS ARE OUT OF THEIR SCHOOL UNIFORMS, I KEEP A FASHION MAGAZINE ON HAND AND TRY TO DECIDE WHAT TO DRESS THEM IN. BUT HE'S THE FIRST CHARACTER I'VE EVER FELT LOOKED GOOD IN ANYTHING I PUT HIM IN.
THEN THERE'S HIS CLOTHING STYLE.

WHILE I'M AT IT, MAY I PRESENT TO YOU A CLOTHING-SWAP CHALLENGE I'VE BEEN ASKED TO DO FOR A WHILE NOW.
HERE IS EVERYONE SWAPPING THE CLOTHES WE'VE SEEN THEM IN THROUGHOUT THE STORY.
IT DOESN'T LOOK VERY GOOD ON MOST OF THEM...

HUH?
ALL I HAD TO USE ON HIM WERE GREENS...
ON A RANDOM NOTE, THE MINT GREEN COLOR OF HIS HAIR ON THE COVER WAS THE RESULT OF THE PROCESS OF ELIMINATION.

AFTERWORD

Volume 12 was a little calmer than previous volumes. The story was lighthearted overall, but when I was writing, times were anything but lighthearted. That is the situation I, Kyo Shirodaira, was in.

Even though the climax is supposed to be close at hand, it's tempting to ask if everything's really going to work out given the way things stand right now. This volume centered around the calm daily lives of *Spiral*'s latest new character, Hizumi, and our main character, who is consciously making an effort to be strong. I think breaks like these are good every once in a while.

But still, I have to say it was pretty hard writing Hizumi's dialogue in the Kansai dialect. I've lived in the Kansai area for years, and even though all I was doing was putting down on paper the words that I often use myself, I get the feeling it didn't go over so well.

It got me wondering if I really had the Kansai accent down. Are the phrases I use every day like "this won't do" and "I wonder 'bout that" actually that bizarre? The Kansai accent that Hizumi uses feels really fake, even to me.

But anyway, this story has always taken place on a school campus, though it's a school campus that's been plagued with nothing but brutal violence. That's why I made an extra effort to put typical school-life elements in it, to keep it as school-manga-esque as possible.

Mysteries are stories that are built on progressive revelations, but at this point in our manga it feels like our story has veered quite a bit from that. Still, the psychological and everyday events between Ayumu and Hizumi that I drew in this volume are all leading up to coming developments.....which we will see in the

next volume. When Ayumu uses logic again to penetrate to the heart of all his problems, it will mark the sudden end of this common life.

And with that, a final announcement.

With the bonus novel all wrapped up, GANGAN NET has a plan for doing something else with the release of the comic. This time they'll be posting the rest of the author's commentary for each chapter like you see in "LIFE IS SPIRAL."

By the time "LIFE IS SPIRAL" came out, the comic version was only up to Volume 8, so I regret that I was only able to do commentary up to Chapter 40. That's why I hope I get to do commentary up to the last chapter through this project.

The next release will be Chapters 41 through 50 that were in Volumes 9 and 10. I won't be writing anything earthshattering, but if you are looking for a way to kill some time, please check it out.

Well, I'll be praying that we meet again in Volume 13.

城平京

KYO SHIRODAIRA

Spiral

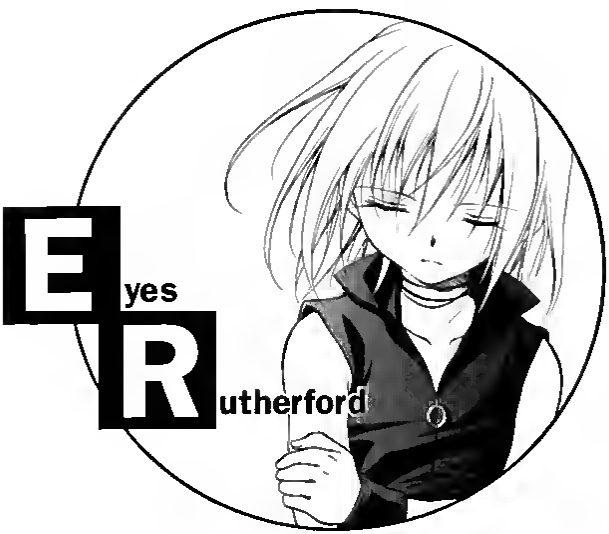
THE BONDS OF REASONING 12

Omake!

TRANSLATION NOTES

Page 188

The **Kansai dialect** spoken in western Japan is the most widely recognized in the nation. To speakers of standard Japanese, the Kansai dialect sounds faster, rougher, and livelier.



SPIRAL
The Bonds of Reasoning ⑫

Kyo Shirodaira
Eita Mizuno

Translation: Christine Dashiell

Lettering: Alexis Eckerman

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